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Free-Thinking

R I G H T L Y

S T A T E D;

Wherein A

D I S C O U R S E

(F a l s l y s o c a l l ' d)

I S F U L L Y

C O N S I D E R ' D.

*A Scornor seeketh Wisdom, and findeth it not,
but Knowledge is easy to him that under-
standeth. Prov. xiv. 6.*

L O N D O N :

Printed for George Strahan, at the Golden Ball,
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Free-Thinking

RIGHTLY

STATED.

- I.  Freedom, whether of Thought or Action, according to the true Notion of it, ought not to be opposed, neither should be refused to any, being both reasonable and desirable on the Account of the many Advantages which it may bring. But then in both respects it is often perverted, and made the Foundation of pernicious destructive Things. For some under the Presence of Liberty, contend for a wicked Licentiousness, and do complain of Slavery if they are
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not allowed to do whatever they please, all that seems right in their own Eyes, without any regard to publick Good or the private Interest of others. So the Free-thinking which some plead for, is in effect nothing but petulant and insolent opposition to the clearest Truths, and a Presumption to condemn what is most important and valuable. Wherefore to prevent a Misunderstanding of the Subject, and a confused Debate about Words. It is necessary first to state the Notion of Free-thinking, and to consider whether any Thing be aimed at besides that which is implied in the true and genuine Notion of it.

II. This Author pag. 5. gives a *Definition of Free-thinking*, which he says, *cannot be excepted against*. But I am of the Opinion, that it is exceptionable, because defective, neither displaying the Nature of Free-thinking fully, nor yet guarding against the Mistakes and Abuses of it, or at least not doing it so clearly as to obviate and prevent them. For to think freely is not only *using the Understanding to find out the Meaning and Evidence of a Proposition*: But also it is the endeavouring to know the Nature of Things proposed, and to be sensible of the Importance of them, so as that they may be entertain'd suitably. One may know the Meaning of a Proposition, and see the Truth of it, and yet not think on the Consequence: And if that be not done, he does not think reasonably, and so does not use his natural Freedom to think as he ought. For certainly all Things are not equal, nor of a like Value ;

lue ; and consequently there ought to be a different Concernment for them, which I fear is but little consider'd by many who set up for *Free-thinkers*.

III. After a short, and at least somewhat obscure Definition of *Free-thinking*, this Author passes immediately to give many Reasons for it, upon supposition that there is here a Restraint from Free-thinking, and a Discouragement to it, which he also very often complains of in express Terms. But as some of his Reasons are weak and little to the Purpose ; so there was no great Necessity of producing and enlarging upon Reasons for Free-thinking, when the Obligation to it is and will be own'd by all Men of Sense. If the Notion of Free-thinking had been a little clear'd, if certain Instructions, proper Rules, and a right Method for the Performance of it had been proposed, it would have made his Discourse more useful. It is fit, yea necessary, to know something of These, otherwise one shall never think wisely, neither be able to know or understand the Truth. Wherefore I shall propose some short Thoughts about them, and then proceed to make Remarks upon some Things deliver'd and advanced in this Discourse.

IV. Free-thinking in the only proper Sense, is to be understood in opposition to Ignorance and Stupidity, which hamper and confine the Understanding, so that it cannot exert it self aright, that is, as it becomes a reasonable Creature, whose

4 *Free-Thinking Rightly Stated.*

Nature is to follow Truth and Goodness. Wherefore to think freely is not to think wildly or extravagantly, it is not to take the Freedom of gainfaying every Person, or of overturning every received Notion, nor yet of advancing Opinions according to Fancy, Passion, Humour or Interest : But it is to think justly according to Truth and Evidence, and suitably to the Nature of Things, neither overvaluing nor undervaluing them. This requires a serious and careful Examination both of the Truth and Certainty, and also of the Importance of all that is proposed and received, so that after one has thought thus, he may be fully persuaded in his own Mind, and be able to justify himself and satisfy others concerning both his Opinions and Practices, that they are all his free choice.

V. For carrying on this kind of Thinking and attaining the End of it, all Prejudices must be laid aside, nor must there be any stated Aversion, but a sincere ready Disposition to receive every Truth, however it appear, or whatever may be the Consequence. All rashness and precipitancy must be carefully avoided ; for few important Truths can be taken up or well understood in haste and hurry. Many lose Truth by asking hastily for it, as *Pilate* did, and like him not having Patience till it be discovered ; short, suddain and careless Views can make but little Discovery. The Understanding can never penetrate without frequent Reflections and deep Meditation. Nor then too, but when Pride, Selfconceit, and Affec-
tation

Station of Novelty and Singularity are curb'd as much as possible : For these blind and byas's the Understanding, and commonly do cause a Mis-carriage in the search of Truth. Likewise Truth is obstructed by a Spirit of Levity and Derision ; for saith *Solomon, a Scornor seeketh Wisdom, and findeth it not.* He that does not consider, will never understand ; and Jestings is inconsistent with serious Consideration : A Mocker of Persons shuts his Eyes upon their Excellencies and Merits ; and he that gives himself to ridicule all Doctrines and Opinions, neither will nor can perceive the Truth and Importance of any of them. In like manner, he who is resolv'd always to gainsay and cavil at every Thing propos'd, is resolv'd never to be convinc'd. Wherefore whosoever intends to think freely and wisely, must resolve to be serious and deliberate, humble and modest, both cautious against Imposition and Delusion, and also susceptible of what is well attested, otherwise he will receive only what he likes, and lays a Prohibition upon other Things, which is inconsistent with Free-thinking, and unbecoming a free impartial Thinker.

VI. Thinking after this Manner is Wisdom, and the Way to advance in Knowledge, Perfection and Happiness, and so nothing can be more becoming Men. A Restraint from this, is indeed a Grievance justly to be complain'd of. Nor will any exclaim against the Practice, or cry-out Danger from it, to either the publick or private Persons, except ignorant or cunning designing

Men, whose Counsels and Projects will not abide a Tryal. Indeed Cheats and Impostors have Interest to decry it, as Enthusiasts to be jealous of it : Because this will detect the Forgeries of the one, and shew the Delusions of the other. But this will promote the Knowledge of the Truth, and give every one a true Taste of it. Nor is it left to every one's own Pleasure, whether he will think thus wisely and freely, for God requires it of all, and has made it their Duty, having for this End given them reasonable Faculties. Which reasonable Faculties should be mostly and chiefly employed about Matters of Religion, because they are of the greatest Moment ; otherwise we are guilty of neglecting the best and chiefest Things, and of throwing away our Life and Time upon what will turn to the least Account.

VII. It is ignorantly supposed by some, and falsely represented by others, that the Christian Religion is securest when there is the least Inquiry into it. Nor can there be a greater Reproach cast upon our Religion, nor a greater Injury done to it, than to say, that *Ignorance is the Mother of Devotion*. For though Ignorance may be, and indeed is, the support of other Religions, which gave Occasion to the Saying, yet the Christian Religion stands upon a sure Foundation, which the strictest Inquiry cannot shake, and certainly the better one knows, and the more he considers the Evidence of the Christian Religion, its Doctrines, Precepts and Institutions,

stitutions, he will be more stedfast and immovable in the Profession of it, and more careful to observe it. Wherefore there is in the Scripture in general, and in the New Testament, in particular, frequent Exhortations, to see, to search, to think, to understand, to consider, to study and encrease in Knowledge; because the practising these Things, would both make and confirm Converts.

VIII. Now as the Gospel does not forbid Free-thinking, so neither does our Church restrain Persons from it, nor any Protestant Church that I know. And indeed 'twould be very unjust in them, if they did that themselves, which they complain of in the Church of *Rome*. But that no such Thing can be charged on our Church and Clergy, is evident to all amongst us. For is there any where more Opportunity, or greater Helps for knowing the Truth? Are there any People more reasonably treated, that is, used more like Men? Is there any Thing proposed or required, for which there are not first good Reasons given? Is there any Thing imposed to be believed, which is not shewed to be contained in Scripture? And is not Scripture in every ones Hand? So that if the People will follow the noble *Bereans*, and search, they may see with their own Eyes, whether what we say be true. Nor can it be said, that even the Scripture is imposed by implicit Faith; for undoubted Proofs of it are laid before them: Nor are they denied the Writings of either Friends or Enemies, that e-

very one may see and judge himself, how little we follow *cunningly devised Fables*, how far from taking Advantage of Peoples supposed Credulity, and how careful to distinguish the Doctrines of Men, from the real Word of God.

IX. Now after all this, is it not surprising, how any can make such Noise and Clamour about Restraints to Free-thinking here? What may Strangers think of this Nation and Church by reading this Book? May not they apprehend that our People are as ignorant as the *Muscovites*, that some *new Inquisition* is set up to fright People from all reasonable Inquiries? That our Church-Service must be in an unknown Tongue, and that there is neither Preaching nor Catechising with us, for informing Peoples Judgment, and for making them to know and understand what they Profess? If this was the Case, one could not well complain more than this Author does, nor represent a Church and Clergy more odiously; but there is no Ground for such scandalous Assertions and Suggestions as are thrown up and down in this Discourse. It is a Libel notoriously false, and the Author must be either very ignorant, or very much imposed on, or must have thrown off all Modesty. When Men are transported with Spite, Malice, and Unreasonable Prejudices, they commonly forget to put on the commendable Ornaments of Honour, Probity and Veracity.

There is so little reason to complain of obstructing Free-thinking by unjust and unreasonable Restraints

Restraints, that alas there is too much reason to complain of the Remissness of both the Civil and Ecclesiastical Government against licentious Writing. How freely in one Sense, that is, how wickedly must some think in Private; and what wonder that there are such Discourses, as are reported to be in *the Grecian Coffee house*, and other Places, when almost every Week there are published Scandalous, Impious and Blasphemous *Pamphlets*, affronting both our civil Constitution, and our established Religion, among which I may very well reckon this *Discourse of Free-thinking*. I hope those that should, will at last be awakened to restrain them, which can give no more just ground of Complaint, than to keep the *Mobocks* from running again up and down the Streets, to kill or mangle all they should meet.

X. As this Author complains unreasonably of Restraints to *Free-thinking* among us; so there is all Reason to complain of him, for departing from the true and proper Notion of it, and for endeavouring to obtrude perverse Things under the Colour and Pretext of this innocent Term. For either by plain Assertions or Insinuations, and strong Innuendoes, it may appear to any one, that by *Free-thinking*, he sometimes means an indifferency and unconcernedness towards all received Opinions, especially relating to God, Revelation, and Religion, which is to turn *Free-thinking* into Stupidity, and want of Thought. For certainly he does not think, who is unconcerned, whether there be a God, or whether
God

God has ever reveal'd himself to Men, and does require any particular Behaviour of them ; whether the Gospel be true, and a future Life certain, and what are the necessary Conditions for obtaining that eternal Blessedness. Nothing can be of greater Moment, than the Truth of these Things, neither should any Thing be studied more seriously ; for if these Things be true and certain, they put us under Obligations very different, from what would be upon us, if there was no Reality in them. Wherefore every wise Man will examine them, and enquire into the Truth of them. And he that does not, ties up his Reason, and is a meer unthinking Animal, like a *Brute*, who is only moved by present outward Objects.

XI. Again this Author makes *Free-thinking* to consist in throwing off Guides, Directors and Teachers. He begins with this in the very 2d Page, and carries it on to the End. From this Conceit He, on all Occasions, rails at the Clergy, and represents them as an useless Burden which should be laid aside. Now what a false and foolish Thing is it to say that Direction and Information hinders Free-thinking? Are all helps Restraints? Then Glasses hinder Free-seeing, Horses and Coaches Free-travelling. Cannot one hear another without abandoning his own Reason? Is Free-sight restrain'd, because another perswaded to use it, and gave the Occasion? Is it impossible to have the just Sense of the Contrivance of a House, or of the Beauty of a Garden,

den, because the favour of beholding them was owing to another? If Teaching be inconsistent with Free-thinking, then is also Reading; and so Books must be laid aside as well as Men: Which would make it tedious, if not impossible to come to the Knowledge of any Science. According to this Notion, there never was a Free-thinker in the World, except 'twas that fabulous *Aben Tokdam*, whose History Dr. *Pocock* has given us from an *Arabick Manuscript*. The usefulness and necessity of Guides and Teachers, to the learning all Arts and Sciences, are acknowledged by all, and why should there be such a strong aversion to them in Religion. Is it not because they would have all as ignorant of Religion, as they must be of other Sciences, if they were not taught. The Christian Religion was first propagated, as it is still kept up by Preaching and Teaching, which are therefore so much opposed by them, who are engaged in a Design of putting a Stop to the Progress of it, and of shutting up all if possible, in Ignorance and Unbelief. The Scripture saith, that *Faith comes by Hearing*, and for that Reason, some dissuade from Hearing, that Men may never Believe, but *walk by Sight* only, which will never carry their Thoughts to the other World.

XII. *Thirdly*, By the Tenour of this Discourse, Free-thinking is made an obstinate Incredulity, and a sawcy Presumption, to disbelieve whatever is said, not only by Man, but even God. Deference to any Authority whatsoever, is

is with this Author inconsistent with *Free-thinking*, and therefore it is, that he ridicules the plain Declarations of *Scripture*, which is of *Divine Authority*, as much as the Fables of the *Heathen Poets and Priests*, concerning their *false and fictitious Gods*.

This Notion of Free-thinking is not peculiar to this Author, nor is it new. It was started very soon after the Creation, and the Devil was the Author of it; for he put our first Parents upon Thinking thus freely, of the solemn Declaration of God about *the Tree of Knowledge*: Nor did he it out of any good Will to them, or to improve their Reason, but to destroy them, of which they were soon sensible. So *Corah, Dathan and Abiram* urged all *Israel* to think freely after this Manner, of the Authority of *Moses* and of the Priesthood of *Aaron*, the Consequence of which was a strange unnatural Death to them and their Adherents. All this may be put off like other Things as *Priest-craft*, by this Author and his Club, who laugh at all sacred History. But they who are wise and sober-minded will take warning, and learn by these and other Instances to beware of affronting God, either by opposing his known Will, or contradicting any Part of his Holy Word.

An Enquiry into the Evidence and Certainty of any Revelation, or pretended Inspiration, is allowable because most just and reasonable. Nay, it is a strict Duty, lest thro' carelessness or unconcernedness we be deluded, imposed upon, and drawn away by false Prophets. But after a rea-
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sonable Satisfaction that the Thing is of God; and that they who speak, do it by his Authority, and by virtue of his Commission, as is evident that *Moses*, the Prophets, and Apostles did, then to question the Truth of any Thing so delivered, because not suitable to our Inclinations, or agreeable to our Schemes, or conform to our prepossessioned Notions, or comprehensible by our Understanding, or because the whole Mystery is not yet unfolded. This is to deny God's Veracity and sovereign Authority, and to put him upon the same Level with our selves, than which nothing can be more heinous and provoking. It is Rudeness to give even a Man of common probity the Lie, before he has given the Proofs of his Assertion. And none but an inconsiderate Fool will contradict what an honest, judicious and disinterested Person delivers gravely and seriously, upon full Conviction and Experience, only because it is otherwise unaccountable: for he knows little, and has consider'd less, who will not, or does not own that many strange Things are true. But tho' Men may be deceived, yet God cannot; neither will he deceive others, and so it is the height of Impiety to hesitate in the Belief of what he says.

Both Extremes, *viz.* Credulity and Incredulity, are to be equally avoided, because equally unreasonable. Credulity is the Effect of weakness, and an obstinate Incredulity shews perverseness of Mind. A credulous Temper lies open to Error and Delusion, and a pertinacious Incredulity bars out Truth. There is no Reason to cherish Incredulity with Respect to Religion, more than

to other Things ; and if it be entertain'd universally, 'twill render one entirely Ignorant. Credulity is not the Foundation of the Christian Religion, as is falsely represented and suggested. Indeed it requires Faith and a tractable Temper, but it is a Faith reasonable and well grounded, and built upon a better Foundation, than that which is necessary to all humane Transactions. No Man can be a Christian unless he resolve to be a Believer : But he must also be as great, yea a greater Believer, if he resolve to live in the World, to have any Conversation and Commerce with Men, and to carry on any Design or Undertaking : For every Man that knows the World, or has any Experience, must needs be sensible that all humane Affairs roll upon Things far less certain, and against which there lye greater Objections, than against any Thing of the Christian Religion, which renders Unbelievers more inexcuseable.

XIII. *Fourthly*, The Free-thinking which is pleaded for, and recommended by this Author, seems to be plainly Atheism and Irreligion. Indeed he complains of the Unjustice of charging Atheism upon Free-thinkers, and represents it as done maliciously, only to debarr Persons from Free-thinking. He also pag. 104. endeavours to wipe off the Charge, and to shew that Men will not be Atheists by Free-thinking, which is certainly true, taking it in its right Sense. For neither Atheism nor Deism are the Effects of true Thinking upon what may be observed from se-
rious

rious Enquiries. But yet for all this, his Free-thinking, that is, his Manner of exemplifying it, introduces Atheism and Irreligion. For tho' he disowns the Name, yet it is too evident that he does not so much hate the Thing. That I may not seem uncharitable or too severe, I appeal to every ingenuous and impartial Reader, whether this long Letter or Discourse, does not abound with undecent and irreverent Expressions of God? Whether the fear of him is not represented as idle Superstition? Whether Intercourse betwixt God and Men, is not reflected on as a Cheat and Delusion? Whether the Christian Religion is not made a Jest of, as much as Paganism? Whether Jesus Christ is not put upon the level with *Foke of China*, and *Sommonocodam of Siam*, who are also, as he alleges, called *Saviours of the World*, and said to be *born of Virgins*, and promised to satisfy for Men's Sins? And whether these are not all Blasphemous Innuendoes? Moreover, I leave it to every one to judge, whether this Author does not blasphemously rank our *Holy Scripture* with the *Shaster* of the *Bramins*, the *Zunduvastam* of the *Persees*, the *Alcoran* and other the like, and whether he offers any Thing in favour of that, more than of these? Are not these the Free-thoughts of this Author, which he would have other Free-thinkers to entertain?

Further, are not the Free-thinkers which he reckons up and proposes for Examples, represented as Atheists? I do not say that they all were such, God forbid; but only that he gives them

them such a Character, and bestows great Encomiums upon them, for not troubling themselves with the Thoughts of God or Religion, for never minding Prayers, neither believing a future State; but leaving all these Things as unworthy of them, to the simple, credulous, and superstitious Vulgar. If this is not a Recommendation of Atheism, I know not what is such. And if the Free-thinking which he pleads for, tends to Atheism and Irreligion, it is foolish in every Sense, and on every Account, being highly unreasonable and impious, destructive of the publick Peace here, and the Means of eternal Destruction to himself and Followers.

XIV. Thus it may be evident to every one, that this Discourse does not answer the *specious Title* prefix'd, to entice Readers, and to delude the Simple and Unwary. It is as far from the Purpose, as *East* from *West*. It is not better than an Atheistical Ramble after wild Notions, to confound the Understandings of the Weak, and to discourage those who have not yet begun to Think, by suggesting that the finding Truth is almost impossible, and to the Generality must be insuperably difficult. It is a Mass of incoherent Blasphemies, inclining Persons to throw off all Respect to God and Man, and introducing into them an aversion to Matters of the greatest Importance. So that this Discourse is in effect an Impediment to Free-thinking, in its just and proper Notion, whatever might be intended, and by it the Author seems to be the least Free-thinker

thinker in the World, because rash, headstrong, and full of Prejudices and Mistakes; all which will further appear by the Examination of some Particulars.

First, p. 6. He says, *if the Knowledge of no Truth be forbidden us by God*, and so supposeth, that there is none forbidden. But if he had read and considered the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, or had any regard to its Authority, he would neither have said nor supposed any such Thing. For all Truths are not there revealed; and as it is in vain to carry our *religious Enquiries* beyond *Revelation*, so it is offensive. That which is revealed, we should study and meditate upon: But it is a sinful Presumption to pry curiously into what is hid from us. *Secret Things*, *saith *Moses*, *belong unto the Lord our God; but those Things which are Revealed belong unto us, and unto our Children*. And these Things are sufficient for all the Time we have upon Earth. So our blessed Lord reproved his Disciples for their Curiosity, after the Time when the Kingdom should be restored unto *Israel*; *It is not for you*, said he unto them, *to know the Times or the Seasons which the Father has put in his own Power*, Acts i. 7. Where there is no Revelation, there is no certain Light to walk by; and it is not allowed us to attempt by Fancy, or our own weak Reason, to know the hidden Things of God: For this is to be too bold with God, to forget our Distance, and to subject him to our narrow Capacities.

* Deut. xxix. 29.

XVI. Again in the same Page, he offers a Parallel to *Free-thinking*, viz. *Free-painting*; and by shewing how much the Art of Painting is advanc'd by being *Free*, and without Restraints, and by having all Encouragement given to it as in *Italy*, he would therefore dispose Persons to Favour, and encourage *Free-thinking* in all its Latitude. But this is a very improper and absurd Comparison; for Painting and Thinking have quite different Ends, and cannot be carried on in the same Manner, and after the same Method. The Art of Painting is chiefly intended to please, and therefore the Painter is allowed to follow his own Fancy, that he may give a surprising Delight to the Fancy of others. Those fine *Italian* Pieces, are not admired for any real Likeness, or true Resemblance, so much as for their lively Colours, their artful Shades, and the bold Strokes of the Painters Imagination. But the End of Thinking is to find out Truth, which is most likely to be found, by keeping to the right Method, by attending to the proper Rules, and by observing strictly and impartially those Means which may bring us to it: All which indeed are Restraints, but very reasonable, and very necessary. For if these be laid aside, and Liberty given to the Mind and Fancy to rove, the Thoughts and Notions would be as unlike to Truth, as some admired Pictures are to their pretended Originals.

In the same Paragraph he shews his devout Respect for *Christian Divinity*, by joining it with
Pagan,

Pagan, and commending both, only for *furnishing the Painter with Matter*. But it may be, he would even have spared this Commendation of *Christian Divinity*, if he had consider'd that it restrain'd *Painters* from some Things, *viz.* lascivious and immodest Pictures, and especially from all Representations of the God-head, the blessed Trinity, or any Person of the Trinity, except the Son incarnate, because all Representations are false and dishonourable to God, as prejudicial to Men, by corrupting their Ideas of the invisible God-head, which transcends infinitely all that is seen, or can be imagined. It would be highly Criminal, and most worthy of Punishment, to represent Majesty by a crown'd Monkey, or some such ugly Figure; for this is a plain Affront, and must be intended to beget a disrespect to Majesty. And so is the best Representation of the Deity.

XVII. P. 9. He enlarges on the Praise of *Homer*, as he does commonly of all the *Heathen Authors*, whom he has occasion to mention, whereas the sacred Writers have no Honour or Respect paid to them. *Homer* he commends for being skill'd in all Arts and Sciences, but especially for having *the particular knowledge of a Coach-maker*, because in his *Iliad*, he describes a *Chariot*, and *Chariot Wheel*, which is ridiculous. For if his reasoning was good, all our Orators and Poets, and particularly the ingenious Esq; *Bickerstaff*, must be skill'd not only in *Coach-making*, but *Watch-making*, and every other Trade. And yet

yet I should neither wrong nor affront them if did say, that scarce one of them could earn two Pence a Day at any *Trade*, for either Working or Directing. An Orator or Poet may make an elegant Allusion, as *Homer* does, to the obvious Ends and Uses of Things, as he that hears or reads, may understand the Beauty and Fitness of the Metaphor, and yet neither of them have any great Knowledge or Skill in the Mechanical Part.

XVIII. P. 10. There is an Encomium of the *Holy Bible*, which has more of Truth in it, than the Author is sensible of. But it is all by way of Banter from him, to fright away the simple and unlearned from reading the *Bible*, which, as he represents it, cannot be understood without Philosophy, and the knowledge of all Nature, History, Geography, Chronology, Geometry, and all Mathematicks, as well as other Sciences. And if so, it is in vain for the Generality to attempt the reading of it, and then the Restraint given by it, would be taken off.

But it seems *Free-thinkers*, such as this Man is, do not always consider, nor remember what they said at another Time : did he not in the former Paragraph set forth *Homers Iliads*, as a most perfect Composition relating to, and containing the Principles of every Art and Science ; and yet it is put into the Hands of Boys, before they learn any Art or other Science. And there are many *School-Boys*, who would think themselves injur'd, if their Knowledge of this celebrated Poet were call'd in question.

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There is certainly in Scripture Matter enough to exercise the Judgment and Understanding of the greatest, the most learned, and the most knowing Men. And yet *it giveth Wisdom unto the Simple*, and maketh the Unlearned wise unto Salvation, which is the Scope and Purport of it.

I have heard of a Lady who was resolv'd to leave our Church, and to go over to that of Rome; but she would do it like some others, with the Bustle and Formality of a Conference, that she might have the hypocritical Pretext of Conviction. At this Conference, she often Teased a Clergyman with the seeming Difficulty and Perplexity of Scripture, which for that Reason she alledged could not be a *Rule*, as it made a *visible Guide* necessary. This provok'd him to say, *Madam, can any Thing be more plain, than that thou shalt not commit Adultery*, which indeed was plainer than her Ladyship cared to hear. It may be as home to this Gentleman, to put him in mind how it is written, *Blessed is the Man that walketh not in the Counsel of the Ungodly, nor standeth in the Way of Sinners, nor sitteth in the Seat of the Scornful*. This Text may be understood without Philosophy, or the Mathematicks; and if he will be pleased to go forward, and to consider and observe the following Words, which are also plain, he shall see it necessary to correct his present Thoughts, and shall be sensible that those Things are worthy of all Esteem, which now he has in Derision.

XIX. In the close of this Paragraph he has these Words, *So that no Duty whatsoever contain'd in Scripture, can be precisely, and with certainty understood, without a Knowledge of the Law of Nature.* This is an Error, and of no small Consequence, tho' I cannot say, it is singular to this Author? For it implies, that *the Laws of Nature* are necessary to confirm *the Duties of Scripture*, and to set *Limitations to them*, as is express'd a few Lines before. But though both *the Laws of Nature*, and also *of Nations*, may be studied by the Curious, who have Time and Opportunity; for there is some Pleasure and Use too, to know what has been universally received, and what natural Reason may observe. And as this will prove, that Good and Evil are not arbitrary Things, as some imagine, but have a real Foundation in Nature; so t'will convince one of the excellency of *Scripture Revelation*, which is as much more perfect than *Nature* it self, as Noon-tide is beyond the dawning of the Morning; and which gives a more perfect System of Morality, than the wisest ever did draw from *the Laws of Nature*, or indeed can be drawn. I say tho' for, these Reasons *the Laws of Nature*, may be studied profitably, yet the Study of them is not absolutely necessary to the Knowledge of our present Duty, and to understand what is the Good we now should do. For all this may be learned both more easily, and more certainly from Scripture, which is wonderfully contrived by the Wisdom of God, to save the trouble of a tedious Inquisition after Truth

Truth and Righteousness, of which the Generality are altogether incapable, for want either of Time or Judgment. Neither is the Knowledge of the *Laws of Nature*, much less the Sentiments and Opinions of Men, necessary to confirm the Obligation of *Scripture Duties*. For the Will of God is the *supreme Law*, and *prima regula Morum*, to speak in the Phrase of *Moralists*. His Will lays an indispenfible Obligation when manifested, by whatsoever Ways or Means it is manifested. *The Laws of Nature* are Obligatory, chiefly because they are the fix'd Declarations of his Will and Pleasure, who created all Things, and is the Sovereign of the World. And for the same Reason, whatsoever he is pleas'd to superadd to these Laws, ought to be equally honoured, and religiously observed, otherwise God is not duely honoured. To limit our Obedience by either *the Laws of Nature*, or the Dictates of Human Reason, is Rebellion and Wickedness before God, for it is a disowning his sovereign Authority, which has an everlasting Foundation in his own Almighty Power, and our Existence, and in the creation of all other Things. By virtue of this, he may command whatsoever he pleaseth, and whatsoever he is pleas'd to command, becomes as soon as known our strict Duty. Wherefore *Nature* must not set Bounds to *Revelation*, nor must the pretended *Laws of Nature* be brought to limit *Scripture Duties*, which we are bound to observe, though the Obligation to them can be shewed nowhere else. And if some *Expressions of Scripture*

ture be too *Universal*, as this Author alledges, the *Qualification* may be learned, and must be taken from Scripture it self, which is the surest Rule, and also clearer than any other that can be proposed. This is an unalterable Truth, but little consider'd : Otherwise what is called *the positive Precepts and Institutions* of Scripture, would not be so much slighted.

XX. P. 13. It is said, that *the most ancient Fathers of the Church, no less absurdly supposed God to be Material, and many Christians in all Ages supposed him to have the Shape of a Man.* This is Slander and Falshood to a Witness; for that *God is a Spirit, and not like to any Thing that is seen or visible*, is the known and received Doctrine of the Catholick Church thro' all Ages. But this Author makes no Scruple of Slandering either private Persons, or National Churches, nor yet the Catholick, which he charges with the Errors of those who left her Communion, and who were censured for departing from her Doctrine. And if he either do find; or can wrest an Absurdity out of any Author, he presumes there is Ground enough to calumniate whole Parties, Nations or Churches, as if all must be of the same Mind with every private Writer, who was inconsiderate in his Reasonings or fond of advancing singular Notions. So another some Years hence, may take upon him to charge the present Church of *England* with *Dr. Clark's*, and *Mr. Whiston's* Notions of the Trinity, which cannot be judged fair Dealing.

XXI. What

XXI. What follows in the same and next Page, is indeed a sad Truth, *viz.* That gross Errors both in Philosophy and Religion, prevailed for many Ages after the Revelation of the Gospel. He only gives Instances of those in the Church of *Rome*; but why did he pass by the Delusions of *Mahomet*, and the *Alcoran*, which seized Christians too, and still over-spread more of the World, than what is left of Christendom.

The Consideration of the general Prevalency of these gross Errors, should be a Warning to *this* and other *Protestant Churches*, and should put them in fear of having their present Light withdrawn, and of being again cast into Darkness. For the Light of Truth is a Favour granted upon the Condition of honouring it, and of living up to it. They who *bold the Truth in Unrighteousness*, neither delight in it, but are vain in their Imaginations, are threatned to be delivered up to Lies and strong Delusions, and to a reprobate Mind, both to do and to think the Things that are not convenient. The *African* and *Eastern Church* indulged Wantonness of Mind, gave way to idle Disputes, and took the Liberty to think too freely of the *Mysteries* of our holy Religion, as this Author does, and would have others to do, and so they brought the Judgment of *Mahometanism* upon them. It is worth any ones Notice, what some have said from their Reading, and serious Observation, that *Mahometanism* followed *Arianism*, and settled where-ever this prevailed. So that they who denied the
God-

God-head of Jesus Christ, were justly deserted by him, and abandoned to gross Imposture, and the vilest Absurdities which ever came into any Man's Head.

And how came the *Western Church*, to abound with so many gross Errors and Abominations? Was it not by setting aside the *Holy Bible*, and putting that Light of *Divine Revelation* under a Bushel? So that the Generality could not see it. Nor was that *prodigious Change* from these Errors, produc'd by such *Free-thinking*, as is pleaded for in *this Discourse*, as the Author alledgeth: But by thinking freely according to the *Holy Scripture*, which had its Authority then retrieved, and to which then was a devout regard. This demonstrates Scripture to be a certain Guide to Truth, and a sure Preservative against all Error in Religion, and religious Matters. Wherefore whosoever takes away *Scripture*, or discredits the Use of it, or proposes something else to be more regarded, has a Design of deceiving the World, and of introducing Errors, Lies and Falshood. In which wicked Design, this Author seems to be too far engaged, whether ignorantly or wilfully he best knows; nor could any Thing be more serviceable to this Design, than *this Discourse* if it should take Effect; but I hope it shall not, for the Mischief and evil Tendency of it are visible.

XXII. P. 15. There is a Comparison stated betwixt *Free-seeing*, and *Free-thinking*, where the Author uses the Term of *Eye-sight Faith* in Derision

rision of that *saving Faith* which *the Scripture* and *Divines* by its Authority do propose and require : And which *St. Paul* defines to be *the Substance of Things hoped for, and the Evidence of Things not seen.*

To restrain Seeing, and to oblige others to subscribe a *Confession of Eye-sight Faith*, he says, *is a Fancy that can hardly come into any Mens Heads, but either of those who are some way or other very remarkable for that kind of Madness, which common People will be apt to mistake for Divine Illumination, or else of cunning projecting Fellows, who have a Design upon Mens Pockets.* This is a fair Intimation what Opinion he has, not only of all the present Ministers of the Gospel, but of the Prophets and Apostles. None but *common People*, that is, such as have little *common Sense*, did acknowledge their *divine Illumination*, as t'was *Madness* or a *Cheat* in them to pretend to it. O what horrid Blasphemy is this.

But to come to the Comparison it self. The Supposition of such a Restraint of seeing, is ridiculous, his Representation of it is Nonsense, and both his Innuendoes and express Inferences, are unreasonable, unjust, and wicked, in Order to raise a Prejudice against *the Christian Religion*, and both the Author and Ministers of it, as combining together to put out Mens Eyes, to destroy their Senses, and to take away their Reason ; and as if *the Articles of the Christian Faith* were like those absur'd and non'sensical Articles of *Eye-sight Faith*, which he sets down.

Now

Now how unreasonable are these Aspersions and Insinuations? For as I have shewed before, true *Free-thinking* is so far from being forbidden, that it is commanded, and all reasonable Helps and Encouragements given to it. And though *Faith* be required, it is only in Things which cannot be seen, as the Belief of them is required upon the best Authority, even the Authority of God himself, which ought to be received as a Demonstration of the Truth. None can complain of Restraints, for all are allowed, yea, called upon to see with their own Eyes, *the Articles of their Faith* written in *clear Characters*, in that Book which God by Miracles and Prophecies, and other undoubted Signs, has attested to be his, and the Declaration of his Will. So far all may, are allowed, yea, required to see without taking any ones simple Word. And if after this they will not Believe, are they not perverse, and unreasonably obstinate? What insolency would it be, in any one to be positive what was, or what could not be without his sight, because within his view, he could discern a Ball, a Square or Triangle, as well as any Man? And what Obstinacy and Impertinency would it be, to reject the Accounts of wise, judicious, and disinterested Persons, concerning the Weather, the Fruits, Animals, and other Things under *the Line*, or beyond *the polar Circles*, because, very different from what is here? And should Divine Revelation be discredited, because it contains Things which Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, and which otherwise could not have
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entred into the Heart of Man? Nothing can be more unreasonable. And as this is the *Free-thinking*, which this Author pleads for, so it is the Duty and Interest of all wise and good Men to oppose it.

XXIII. As this Author has given a Similitude or Comparison from one Sense, so I will propose another from another Sense more to the Purpose. His is from *Seeing*, and mine shall be from *Tasting*. Have not all a right to *Taste*, as well as to *See*? And why should *Tasting* be Restrain'd? Why should not one, if he has a Mind to it, use *Hemlock* instead of *Parsley*, *Henbane* for *Turnep*, and take *Rats-bane* for *Sugar* or *Ginger*? What reason to bind Persons up to the Opinions, Experience and Observation of Physicians, Chymists, and pretended Naturalists, who may be either Fools or Knaves, and so either ignorantly or designedly impose upon Mankind? Thus *Free-Tasters* may urge all the Reasons of *Free-Seers*, and refuse to take any ones Word, or to trust to any but themselves. And would it be no Kindness to offer to convince them, and even to restrain them? Or should they be let alone, till they had destroy'd themselves, and expos'd their Folly? I do not believe that our Author, and his *fellow Free-thinkers*, would complain much of being kept from poisoning themselves, at least, not while they have a conceit of Life. But the Grievance which they complain of, and which makes them so uneasy, is to oblige them to think of the Soul, and to take care of it.

XXIII. P. 24. There are these Words, *I must needs say how much soever I contend for Free-seeing, I cannot but commend the Consistency of the popish Policy, and prefer it to the Policy of certain half-witted Politicians, who draw People in with a Pretence of fair Play, by telling them they shall, and ought to see freely; whereas if they do not see with the Eyes of their Guides, but desire to see with their own, they then use them, not indeed so ill as the Papists, but as ill as they can, that is, as ill as that Degree of Ignorance and Stupidity which prevails will allow them to do.* By Guides, no doubt he means the Clergy, but who are his *half-witted Politicians*, they cannot be the Clergy too, for then t'would not be good Sense. Wherefore by them we must understand such as protect the Clergy, and require People to pay Respect to their Persons, and to wait on their Ministry, viz. the Civil Judges of the Nation, and all other Rulers and Governors, nay, what he says here is applicable to the *Parliament*, who indeed do not burn Persons in *Smithfield*, as in *Queen Maries Days*, but to maintain the Constitution, and their own Honour, do expel *Asgils* out of the House, and sometimes order the Books of other Friends of this Author to be burnt by the common Hangman. And who can tell, but that when they meet, they may have such just Resentments of this respectful Language of *halfwitted Politicians*, as to put the like Compliment upon him.

But further does it not clearly appear by this Passage, that according to his Notion, curbing
Atheism,

Atheism, censuring Blasphemies, remonstrating against Heresie and false Doctrine, defending the Constitution of Church and State, are all unreasonable Restraints and Discouragements of *Free-thinking*. And consequently that both he himself, and *the Society of Free-thinkers* in whose Favour he writes, have form'd a Design of breaking the Cords of Order and Government, of casting off all Respect to Authority, whether *Divine* or *Human*, and of introducing *Hobbes* his chimerical and fantastical *State of Nature*, which gives every one a Liberty both to do, and to think what he pleases: For *doing freely*, will soon follow such *thinking freely*; and would not the Nation then be in a happy Condition?

XXIV. P. 25, and 26. He argues the Absurdity of all Restraints to *Free-thinking*, from the unreasonableness of hindring one, to consider *whether the Christian Religion be founded on Divine Revelation*. And thus he deceives his Readers, as I observ'd before, by varying the Sense and Meaning of *Free-thinking*, making or representing it sometimes, as if 'twas a sawcy, insolent and obstinate Opposition, to all that is said or proposed by what Authority soever: And at other Times to import only an enquiry after Truth. In which last Sense he will have few Adversaries at least amongst us of the Church of *England*. For a modest Enquiry into the Truth, is acknowledged to be both reasonable and necessary, because every one ought to be satisfied of the Truth of what he believes. And it

it is a plain Precept of our Holy Religion, that *all be ready to answer every one that asketh a Reason of the Hope that is in him*, which supposeth that every one should be perswaded in his own Mind, and have good convincing Reasons for his Faith and Hope.

And as there are such Reasons, so it is not only fit, but necessary that all know them, that their Profession may be sincere from a full, free and hearty assent of the Mind, and that also they may *bold the Profession of their Faith without wavering*; for Stedfastness and Adherence do commonly answer Conviction. The influence of a Christian Faith and Hope, will not be great upon the Person, who is ignorant of the Evidence, and sure Foundation of them. But he that sees a sure, certain and clear *Divine Revelation* for all that is to be believed and hoped, *will be stedfast, immoveable, and always abounding in every Work of the Lord, knowing that his Labour shall not be in vain*. Wherefore it ought to be wished, that all would seriously look into the sure Foundation of the Christian Religion, which would be a doing themselves the greatest Kindness, as 'twould be a great Encouragement to our Ministry, for then our Instructions and Exhortations would be heard and receiv'd with devout Attention, which would render them more effectual. But how little does this Author encourage this serious and necessary Enquiry, when he makes all pretext to *Divine Revelation*, either *Madness* or a *Cheat*, from which it follows, that the Christian Religion has no Foundation at all.

XXV. P. 27. The 5th Argument or Motive for *Free-thinking*, is, *the great Benefit of it to destroy the Devils Kingdom among Men, whereas the other means employ'd against him, such as casting him out miraculously, &c. have often increas'd, but never wholly destroy'd his Power.* This is surprising. Strange! That the Devil should be more afraid of *Free-thinkers*, than of a *miraculous Power*, and that he should be able to Resist the one, but dare not Face the other. But says our *Author*, it is Matter of Fact, of which all past Ages, as well as the present, may convince us. And the Proof of this is, that the prosecution and burning of Witches cease or take Place, as *Free-thinking* is discouraged or allowed. This Man has a prodigious Assurance, but like others of that Quality, does not much regard either the Truth of his Assertions, or the Exactness of his Reasoning: For both the Matter of Fact, and the Inference he draws from it may be denied.

First, It is not true, that the Prosecution of Witches has ceased, where *Free-thinking* has been encouraged and allow'd. I suppose what none will deny, that *Free-thinking* in this Authors Sense, had as great Encouragement, and did as much prevail during *Olivers Usurpation*, and from the Beginning of the *Parliaments Rebellion*, as ever before or since, either here or any where else. And yet then Witches were burn'd, not that I believe because they did then more abound, but from a wicked Policy of the *Free-thinkers of these Times*, to be thought zealous

lous against the Devil, while they followed his Counsel and Instigation. I have been told, that in these *pious Free-thinking Times*, there happen'd to be a great encrease of Poor, particularly in the *Island of Guernsey*, which was very burdensem to the Inhabitants: For remedying this, a Prosecution of Witches was set afoot, which was indeed effectual to the suppressing of the Poor; for the old Men and Women disappear'd of a suddain, and chused to suffer Want within Doors, rather than to venture Burning abroad. So that it appears, that *Free-thinkers* can burn Persons for Witches, if it may serve a Turn.

But suppose that the Prosecution of Witches always ceased, where *Free-thinkers* ruled, will it follow, that then there are no Witches at all? Is not Theft and Murder committed, when they are not punished? Is it a certain Proof, that the Land and People are Innocent, because Judges and Rulers are remiss and careless to execute the Laws? This is the Manner of this Mans Reasoning, which requires new Rules of *Logick* to be received.

Neither does it follow, that the Devils Kingdom must be destroyed, because there are no Instances of Witches, nor of the Prosecution of them. For *Witchcraft* is but one Branch of his Kingdom, and one Instance of his Power. His Kingdom prospers, and his Power prevails by Atheism, Saducism, and Infidelity, which are delectable to such *Free-thinkers* as our Author; and therefore the cunning old Serpent forbears to shew himself among them, by Witchcraft, Possessions

essions and Obsessions, because these would open their Eyes, and convince them of these Errors which consign them to his eternal Dominion. But these Gentlemen are *ignorant of Satans Devices*. They do not consider, *that the God of this World blinds the Minds of them that believe not, lest the Light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the Image of God, should shine unto them*. They boast of being wiser than others, because not so much disturb'd by the Devil, never reflecting that they are let alone to lull them asleep in their Errors and evil Courses, till they drop into his Power, out of which there is no Redemption. * *Make the Heart of this People fat, and make their Eyes heavy, and shut their Eyes: Lest they see with their Eyes, and hear with their Ears, and understand with their Heart, and convert and be healed*. This Author and his Companions do not fear this Sentence of a Divine Arrest to final Judgment, but it may be apprehended, as they have given just Occasion for it, even in this Passage, which prefers their *Free-thinking* to the casting out the Devil by that *miraculous Power* which was in Jesus Christ, and which he gave to his Apostles and his Disciples, to demonstrate that he came from God, and that the Power and Spirit of God were with him. This was such undeniable Evidence, that nothing but wicked perverseness of Mind, could refuse or asperse it, as did some of the *Jews* then, who therefore were charged with that unpardo-

* Is. vi. 10.

nable Sin against the Holy Ghost, which by this and some other Passages this Author is guilty of; And as they are blasphemous Reflections upon Christ and his Gospel, so they should be read and heard with the utmost Indignation and Abhorrency.

XXVI. P. 28. It is said, *Thus the Devil is banish'd entirely the United Provinces, where Free-thinking is in the greatest Perfection.* Whether the Devil is banish'd *these Provinces*, is not a proper Dispute, and I will not at this Time venture upon it. But that *Free-thinking* in his Sense, and as he practises it, is there in the greatest Perfection, is so notoriously false, that nothing can be more. And I leave it to others to judge, whether the publishing such a false Account of a Place, so near and so well known, is to be ascrib'd to Ignorance or Impudence. But such *Free-thinking* as this Author would set up, is not allowed there at all. There are indeed no torturing Methods to force Persons to speak their Thoughts, and so while they are kept within their own Breasts, they are safe. But if they are so bold, as to vent Thoughts disagreeable and dangerous to the Constitution, or which cast Reproaches on Religion in General, or that which is establish'd there, and incorporated with the State; if this be done either by Discourses in *Coffee-Houses*, or by *Writing*, they are presently taken notice of, curb'd and chastis'd: So that the *Dutch* are scandalized at the License given here, to speak and write against both the Government and Religion. It

It is true, that different Sects are tolerated in the *United Provinces*, nor could it be avoided, because their Liberty from the *Spanish Yoke* was retrieved by the joint Concurrence of all them. But the Government and Administration of Affairs, are only in the Hands of those called *Calvinists*, tho' they are not the most Numerous. And besides *Jews*, they tolerate only profess'd Christians, neither *Atheists* nor *Socinians*. Even the last must disguise themselves, and walk under the Mask of *Arminians* or *Anabaptists*, or else quit the Country. There was lately a *Sect* of *Free-thinkers*, under the Name of *Hebreans*, who set up at *Amsterdam*, but were suppress'd by the Magistrate there. Nor is there such Liberty of the Press in *Holland*, as here. Books against the *State* or *Religion*, bear all the Name of *Cologne*; and if they be very Pernicious, they that sell them are punish'd, as well as the Authors if found. I have seen a Booksellers Shop shut up for selling such. Monsieur *Baile* was turn'd out of his Professorship in *Roterdam* for his *Free-thinking*, and had a Censure put upon his Dictionary. And I am very confident, if this *Discourse of Free-thinking* had been publish'd in *Holland*, the Author had been both fin'd and banish'd the *Provinces*, or confin'd to the *Rasp-House*, as some others have been, for Life, or a certain Number of Years, from which his Estate could not have redeem'd him. If this Account is not credited, and that the Author still persists in his Opinion, that *Free-thinking is in Perfection, in the United Provinces*, let him write to some of his Friends,

to know what Indulgence has been shewed to the *Spinozist Minister of Swol* for the Book he wrote, which was written more artfully, and better disguised, than this *Discourse of Freethinking*. And who knows not, that poor Mr. *Becker* was deprived of his Ministry, for thinking and writing all *Devils* away but *One*.

XXVII. The like Mistake he has committed P. 102. concerning the *Turks*, whom he represents to be *Free-thinkers, and Friends to Freethinking*, whereas the contrary is manifest. For they only tolerate the Christians for the benefit of a *Tribute of Money and Children*. But the Christians dare not attempt to make Converts. And as for the *Turks* themselves, they will not, neither are allowed to think freely of *Mahomet*, or the *Alcoran*. All means of discovering the Errors of either, are taken away; for there is neither Printing, nor Books among them. And as the *Examiner* has truly observed, *Apostacy from their Religion, Profanation of their Mosques, and even Blasphemy against Christ*, whom they Reverence as a *great Prophet*, is punish'd with Death. By these two Instances, we may see how falsely one may think and write, who does not consider, neither will observe nor inquire after good Information.

XXVIII. P. 32. He begins Sect. II. with the *Subjects of Free-thinking, viz. the Nature and Attributes of the eternal Being or God, the Truth and Authority of Books esteem'd Sacred, and the Sense and Meaning of these Books, and in one*
Word

Word religious Questions. Certainly these are material Points, and so most worthy of our Meditation. If by *the Enemies of Free-thinking*, he means our Church and Clergy, as there is reason to believe, he is very injurious to say, that *they deny Persons the Right to think of them*; for the contrary is evident by the daily writing and publishing *religious Treatises*, for engaging them to think of these Matters. But as the Right of Thinking of them is not denied, so he can have no Sense or Notion of them, who does not acknowledge a Necessity of thinking upon them with all Seriousness, and with all Humility. With all Seriousness, because of the greatest Importance, our present Peace, and future Happiness depending on the Knowledge of them; and with all Humility, because they are sublime, and some of them incomprehensible by either Sense, or meer natural Reason. As for Instance, the Nature and Attributes of God are Infinite, and therefore always beyond the reach of our greatest and clearest Apprehension; which makes it a great and unreasonable Presumption in any, by his own Sense and Reason alone, to offer to determine positively and peremptorily, all Particulars relating to them: For this would be the measuring an Infinite, by a Finite. In like Manner, it is evident, that the Knowledge of Gods Counsels and Purposes can only come from himself, for nothing can be more reasonable than that of St. Paul, *What Man knoweth the Things of a Man, save the Spirit of Man, which is in him? Even so the Things of God knoweth no Man, but the Spirit of God.* That is, as none

can know the inward Thoughts of another, unless he some way or other impart them; so it is impossible to know Gods Purposes, Counsels and Contrivances, except he reveal them, and only so far as he reveals them. This therefore requires a careful attention unto *Divine Revelation*, and also an humble Disposition to receive all that *certain Revelation* declares, however surprising or astonishing it may be. For certainly he thinks of himself more highly than he ought to think, who believes he is able to fathom all the Divine Counsels, or that God cannot act without the reach of his Understanding, neither could have intended any Thing that was not perceptible to contemplative Men. As it makes *Revelation* in a great measure superfluous, if it did only discover what Sense, Reason, and common Observation could have found out. If Persons think thus of *God, Revelation*, and the *several Matters* contained in the *sacred Books* of Scripture, they think without Judgment, and shall not be the wiser by their Thinking. But if they resolve to think, as was said above with Seriousness and true Humility, they may, and the Priviledge shall not be denyed them.

XXIX. What is said P. 33, and 34. about Opinions; is dubious, and there is a Passage out of Mr. *Chillingworth* as dubious, I suppose brought in defence of a common Tenet among *Free-thinkers*, that *Errors in Judgment are not culpable*. I have not Mr. *Chillingworth's* Book by me, and so cannot at present clear nor vindicate his Sentiments.

timents. But for stating this Point right, I offer these Things. 1st. That every one is answerable, only for what he may and should know. 2^{dly}, That all are obliged to use the Means for knowing the Truth, not only seriously, but sincerely, for I make a Difference betwixt these Two. 3^{dly}, That all necessary Truths are obvious, and must be evident to them who use the Means, and endeavour sincerely to know them. 4^{thly}, That Ignorance of what God has proposed and does require to be believed, only thro' neglect of the Means, or an unsincere use of them, is not at all excuseable, but a very great Sin; for it is a Contempt of God's Authority, and a slighting his holy Will and Pleasure. 5^{thly}, That either the disbelieving what appears plainly revealed, because mysterious, unconceivable, and inexplicable by human Reason or common Notions, or the entertaining contrary Sentiments, is contradicting God, and as heinous a Sin as any Point of Disobedience can be: For the Homage of our Understandings is due to God, as well as that of our Wills; so that it is equally rebellious to refuse the One, as to deny the Other; that is, to disbelieve what He says, as to disobey what He commands. I have handled this in one of the Discourses annexed to *Right Notions of God and Religion*, to which I refer the Reader.

XXX. P. 35. He has an Invective against *Superstition*, drawn from *Tully* and *Horace*, who are his *sacred Writers*. Now *Superstition* I know none will plead for; but is not the other *Extreme* of

of *Profanity and Irreligion* as much to be avoided? For as the one is the Effect of ignorance and weakness of Mind, so the other is from perverseness and want of Consideration, which is as much, if not more pernicious. These *Extremes* do support one another, and the Partisans of both are Enemies to solid Religion, which is the true *Medium* betwixt them. The superstitious Man counts all Profane that are not as himself, tho' he deceives himself too, by minding only external and lesser Matters. So the profane Person reckons all superstitious who shew any Sense of God and Religion, as it is too apparent that this Author does. The Cure of Superstition, is true solid Knowledge, to discern the Nature of Things, their different Ends and Uses, and to give every Thing its Place. And the serious Consideration of all this will make one ashamed of Profanity and Irreligion, which is an unconcernedness with the best Things, and so no less ignorant and unreasonable as the making no difference at all, but laying equal Stress on the meanest Things as the greatest, which is the true Notion of Superstition. And as the superstitious Person is under Dread and Terrours more than there is Cause for; so the profane Person will not fear when there is a reasonable Cause, which is a foolish Hardiness, as much to be despised as the other.

XXXI. What he says, P. 37. might have been excusable, and passed as a serious Thought, if the Man had been so unfortunate, as to have been born in the *dark Night of Heathenism*, neither

ther ever heard of a more *Divine Person* than *Virgil*, nor seen a *better Book* than his *Poems*, or any Thing fitter to give the true Knowledge of God or of his Will concerning Mankind. But now it is only *Atheism* in a grave Disguise, to prefer *Heathenism* to *Christianity*, to beget a Contempt of these several Revelations contained in Scripture, to set aside the Instructions of the Prophets, Apostles, yea, of Jesus Christ, whom God the Father has evidently sealed, and to put it into Peoples Heads, that *Virgil* and other Heathen Authors are as useful as they to discover such Things, as ought to be believed concerning God and our selves.

None can accuse this Charge of uncharitableness, when he reads in the End of the Paragraph the tacite Reflections on *Divine Institutions*, and how in the Close of the next Page, viz. 38. He has in derision those *superstitious Men*, as he calls them, *who make God talk to all Mankind from Corners, and consequently require Things of Men under the sanction of Misery in the next World, of which they are incapable of having any convincing Evidence that they come from him. They make him to have favourite Nations and People, without any consideration of Merit, and to put other Nations under Disadvantages without any Demerit.*

Is not all this flat Opposition to Scripture? Is not this to deny those authentick Revelations which the Jewish and Christian Church have received? For what is more evident from the History of Scripture, than that God did speak to Mankind
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in some particular Places, which he in mockery calls Corners ? And what is plainer than that the Jews of old were God's *peculiar People* ; as the *Christian Church* is now ? * *He sheweth his Word unto Jacob, his Statutes and Judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any Nation, and as for his Judgments, they have not known them.* And must this be reflected on as absurd ? because the Conduct does not please, neither is understood by rash, inconsiderate and self-conceited Thinkers. What presumption to say unto God, what dost thou ? What Insolency in poor Mortals to presume to prescribe Measures to the Almighty Sovereign of the World ? Should not Men whose Understandings at present are very much confin'd and pent up, I say, should not they be asham'd to take upon them to examine the Councils of Infinite Wisdom, and to pass Verdicts and Censures upon them ? This Author and his Associates, if they believe a God must have but mean and false Notions of him, they cannot believe that he is *Righteous in all his Ways, Holy in all his Works.* They are so conversant with Heathen Authors, and have their Heads so full of the Stories of their false Gods, that they are incapable of just Notions of the true God, or of thinking better of the God of the Christians. And seeing they take this Liberty with plain Divine Revelations, and with the undeniable and uncontraverted Points of Sacred History, we have good Reason to think that they are as bold with

* Psalm cxlvii. 19.

all the undoubted Manifestations of God, and do not even spare the Creation it self. But say also within themselves, and to one another, as *Alphonfus* King of *Spain* blasphemously did, that if they had been at the making of the World, they would have advised it better. Sure they must be displeased with the Suns rising in the *East* and setting in the *West*, and being confin'd betwixt the Tropicks. They can have no Opinion of the Creation, because vast Tracts of Land are cast into the Extremity of Cold, and are six Months without the Light of the Sun, which renders them altogether Unhabitable. And they must make all a Chance, because there are so many Desarts, desolate and barren Places, and that all Countries do not abound alike with Necessaries and Comforts. Every Thing that puzzles them, every Thing which they cannot comprehend must be exploded and laugh'd at. O wise and modest Thinkers ! How worthy of all Encouragement ?

But to come to these Divine Dispensations, which this Author insults and turns into Ridicule, they that are full of themselves, wise and prudent in their own Eyes, are not capable of discerning them : But they that have Reverent, and suitable Thoughts of God, do perceive all of them worthy of God, as of our Praise and Admiration. It cannot be denyed, but that God did only speak in old Time to particular Persons, in particular Places ; but 'twas not for the Benefit of those particular Persons alone, nor yet of those others in that particular Corner of the World, but of all Mankind ; and therefore he

he wisely contrived it, that *the Sound went into all the Earth, and the Words unto the End of the World*. So that all have had more or less Opportunity of Hearing, and so are more or less guilty, for not knowing the holy Will of God. It is also true by Scripture, that the Son of God became Man, *to purchase unto himself a peculiar People*. And yet the Divine Goodness is not restrain'd, neither can God be charged with Partiality, seeing the Terms and Conditions of being Gods Favourite and beloved People, are offer'd to all, and all Nations, and all in every Nation, may claim the Priviledge, and also lay hold on it for their present and eternal Comfort. If a larger Satisfaction about these Matters be desired, it may be had in a *late Discourse* I have published, Entituled, *Salvation the peculiar Priviledge of the Church*.

XXXII. P. 40. He says there have been *infinite Numbers of Pretenders in all Ages to Revelation from Heaven, supported by Miracles, which makes Thinking absolutely necessary, if a Man be obliged to listen to any Revelation at all*. What an Innuendo is in this last Clause? Does it not insinuate, that there may be no Obligation to listen to any Revelation, and if so, thinking on them is not necessary, because it is no Matter of Moment, what is true, or what is false. The *Errata* requires this to be expunged. But this is meer juggling, for he had this Thought when he writ this Passage, it is agreeable to the whole Strain of the Book, and if he had really seen his Error here, he would also made
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an *Errata* of all that follows. And can any doubt but that 'twas to inforce the Suggestion of this Clause, that he quotes a Passage from the Reverend Dr. *Claget*, making *all extraordinary Pretences to Miracles, immediate Revelation and Inspiration*, to be just Grounds of Suspicion, and Reasons for not believing.

Now though I never saw the Book out of which this Passage is taken, yet I am confident it is either falsely quoted, or perverted to another Purpose, than that which that Reverend Divine intended. For he would not, neither could speak so slightly of Miracles and Revelation in general. For if there be any Reason to listen to any Thing, it is to that which is attested by undoubted Miracles, as there is all Reason to believe, what clear and certain Revelation declares. For that must be true which comes from God, and also it is worthy of all Acceptation, nay, it is every ones strict Duty to receive it, unless one will venture to deny the Duty of honouring God, which cannot be done without disowning our Creation, our Preservation, or the having any manner of Dependance on God, for any Thing whatsoever.

Wherefore there can be no doubt, but that these Words of Dr. *Claget*, are to be referr'd only to modern Pretenders to *Miracles, Revelation*, and *immediate Inspiration*. And in that Respect they are strictly true. For all Pretenders to these, since the Days of the Apostles, and all that shall arise hereafter, and make a Noise of these Things, are either downright Impostors,

postors, or under the gross Delusions of Satan, and therefore to be rejected whatever they Teach. For the Gospel is given as the *last Revelation*, its Doctrine, Precepts and Institutions, shall abide unalterably till the coming of Jesus Christ, the glorious Author of it, to judge the World according to it. Therefore as St. Paul says, whosoever teacheth *another Gospel*, that is, any Thing as from God, and in this Name, either *contrary to this*, or *different from it*, he is not to be believed, whether Angel or Man, but ought to be *accursed* as a *false Prophet*, and *Emissary of Satan*.

And as there can be no *true Divine Revelation*, different from the *Christian Religion*; so neither is there any extraordinary Manifestation of the Truth of this to be expected, because neither reasonable nor necessary. For God has sufficiently demonstrated and attested the Truth of the Gospel, and the Evidence of these *Divine Demonstrations and Attestations*, continue to this Day, and shall continue to the End of the World, as they are apparent to all that are reasonable and well-disposed to receive them. So that the asking more Evidences, can come only from such perverseness as the *Jews* were guilty of, when they demanded a Sign of our Lord, while he was working Miracles among them.

It is true, a *glorious Day* is expected, which will bring in the *remainder of the Jews*, and the *fulness of the Gentiles*: But though I will not be so bold as to determine the precise Time when, nor the particular Means how such a great and desirable Change shall be wrought, yet as I have
said

said elsewhere, it may be brought about without *new Revelations* or *Miracles*. And because I do not, neither can find the least intimation of such Things yet to be, in all the * *New Testament*, but rather an Intimation of the contrary, I therefore do not look for any such Thing. And as the Expectation does appear to me altogether groundless, so the entertaining it does only encourage Impositions and Delusions.

As I heartily wish, and do hope, that the Gospel or Christian Religion may spread over the Face of the Earth, and also be effectual wherever it is preached, that is, having a true ascendant over the Minds of Men, so as to become the prevailing Principle of all their Designs and Actions; so this may happen, as the *Reformation* from the Errors and Idolatry of the *Church of Rome*, which was effectuated without *new Revelations* or *Miracles*, or *extraordinary immediate Inspirations*. Before that Time, a careless unconcernedness for Truth, was every where indulged, which encouraged Errors and Impositions: But then God by his wise Providence, brought *publick Affairs* into that *Juncture*, as oblig'd *Princes* to regard *Religion*, as well as their *Temporal Interests*, and to give a more favourable Countenance to those who did bear *Witness* to the Truth; as the Circumstances of private Persons by that *Juncture of publick Affairs* did dispose them to listen to these *Witnesses*, and to receive

* See Discourse annexed to right Notions of God and Religion.

their Information. The Persecutions also which were then, like those upon the first preaching of the Gospel, did rowse up People, and put them upon Enquiries after the Truth, and when-ever that is done, the Truth will prevail. Thus that *Reformation* was begun, and prospered so far, and it would have advanced farther, if the prejudice of Temporal Interest had not been in the way. And so God by his wise and wonderful Providence, may yet give such a surprising Turn to all Human Affairs, as will remove the present Obstacles to both the outward Progress, and the inward Efficacy of the Gospel, by opening the Eyes of all, to behold the Truth and Excellency of it, which once duly considered, and laid to heart, would force an Assent.

I would not have any to think, by what I have said on this Head, that I pretend to have penetrated into the Divine Counsels, or am confident of what God will, or will not do for accomplishing of his Purposes. This would be great Presumption, from which God preserve me. I only desire to cure and check a forward and dangerous Disposition, in some serious and well-meaning People, to follow Pretenders to *new Light, Illumination, Revelation, or extraordinary Inspiration*, which do but harden some Men in their Infidelity and Prejudices against the *Revelation of the Gospel*: And seeing they are neither foretold nor promised, and that God, as has been shewed, can, when his Time cometh, do the desirable Work without them; therefore all Pretenders to these Things, are to be more suspect-

suspected, and less believed than others. And I am perswaded, that the *Reverend Dr. Claget* meant no more by *these Words*, which was the Occasion of this long Digression.

XXXIII. The Paragraph P. 41. about *the Society for propagating the Gospel in Foreign Parts*, though cautiously worded, does discover pretty plainly his inward Sense of the *Christian Religion*. For could any who believed the Truth of Christianity, or who had a just Esteem for it, I say, could such a one think it as great a Favour to have the *Talapoins*, or Priests of *Siam*, come hither to preach their *Heathenism*, as 'twould be to them to have *Preachers of the Gospel* sent thither? And must he not have as little an Opinion of *our Religion*, as of the *Religion of Siam*, who says, that these *Talapoins* ought to have the *same Encouragement* from us, that *true Missionaries* or *Preachers of the Gospel* ought to have in *Siam*. By the *same Encouragement*, is not meant civil and human Treatment, for that is not to be denyed to the greatest *Barbarians*; but it is an *Encouragement* proper and suitable to such as pretend to teach the Truth, *viz.* a serious attentive Ear, and a Disposition to be convinc'd by them. And should *Talapoins*, or any other that come from an ignorant Heathen-part of the World, have such Encouragement from us? Can this be done without departing from the Faith, and forgetting that we have received the sure and infallible Word of God? They that are in doubt of the Truth, and in

search after it, neither know what Party of Men have the best Pretences, I say, they may and ought to hear and try all : But when the Truth is known, should it be given up! After sufficient Conviction, should Men hearken to those we are sure are in Ignorance and Error? If the Gospel be true, there is no other Religion true or acceptable to God, besides the *Christian*, and all the *Heathen World* are in Darkness, and without God. How then can any who believe this, hearken to what *Heathens* say? Is not this to go against Conviction, and to sin wilfully against the Truth? And is it not somewhat Strange, and altogether Sad and Deplorable, that there should be some here so blind, as not to see the Light of the Gospel, or so perverse, as not to acknowledge the Advantage, Excellency and Comfort of it, and who not only think, but presume to write, that the grossest *Heathenism* may deserve Encouragement, as well as *Christianity*, and that a *Project* to bring ignorant *Talapains* hither, is highly reasonable, and perfectly of a piece with that of endeavouring to convert *Heathens* from their Errors, to the Knowledge of the true God, and of *Jesus Christ*, whom to know is Life Eternal.

XXXIV. P. 46. He reassumes his beloved *Topic* about *Priests* and their *Conduct*. He has had all along a *fling* at them : But from this Place, he expatiates and draws in all he can to represent them odious. This is the Secret of the Book, and the chief Motive of Writing it, and
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some others; and it very well answers the Design of advancing Atheism and Irreligion, to endeavour to bring even the Ministers of true Religion into Contempt.

I am neither surpris'd nor uneasie at these Reproaches, as I hope neither are my Brethren; seeing we have been forewarned of them, and are assured, that they shall not hurt us. From the Beginning, *He that was born after the Flesh, persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.* Blessed are ye, saith our Lord, *when Men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of Evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your Reward in Heaven, for so persecuted they the Prophets which were before you.* The Prophets were mocked by *the Sons of Belial* in their Time, who reputed them *Mad-fellows*. The Apostles were held as the *Off-scouring of all Things*, and how should it surprize us to be often abused, seeing we are far short of their Gifts and Graces? And so I could willingly pass over all these Reproaches and Reflections without making a Reply, if our own Credit and personal Interest were only concerned. But seeing it is our Duty to correct and reprove all Sin, and that this of despising Priests, and of vilifying their Office, is set forth in Scripture as no small one, because reflecting on both the Honour and Wisdom of God, and what has provok'd his Wrath to severe Punishments, as may be seen, II Chron. xxxvi. 16, 17.

And seeing too, that this Sin is at this Time a little catching, for the humour of the present Age runs too much upon it; and there are too many who too often make a Sport of abusing the Clergy, tho' they have not as yet cast off all Sense of God and Religion, and are not so irreclaimable as the Author of this Discourse under Examination. I shall therefore for these Reasons, take notice of what this Man saith on this Matter, and shall very fairly and calmly propose, that which may convince any one of the Unjustice of his Reproaches, and of the Falseness of his Reasonings.

First, He throws his Reproaches upon all that bear the Name of *Priests* in general; and makes no Distinction betwixt True and False, Good and Bad, Christian and Heathen. I know he can and will avouch a known Saying for it, but of whom; not of an *Oracle*. Indeed of a good *Poet*, but as Atheistical and Mercenary an one, as ever wrote. I will not say he never spoke Truth, but certainly he never regarded it. He only minded what would please his Party, and make for them. Nor can I forbear to say, that it is a great Reflection on the Sense and Solidity of this Nation, that they are too often shaken by *Poetry* without Truth, and by *Flights* of *Wit* which have no Truth, and but little of good Sense in them, as in this, that *Priests of all Religion are the same*. For, what can be more unjust than this? Should all be abused, because some deserve it? At this rate, all Ranks from the highest to the

the lowest, and all Professions whatsoever, may be represented Odious and Ridiculous. And it is a good Proof, that the *Europeans* are not better than the *Hotentots*, because both are Men. So the most polite and civilized People must be accounted barbarous and brutish, without Arts and Sciences, Breeding and common Sense, because there are in the World whole Nations of whom such Things may be said, who are very well pleas'd with themselves, and do think that they are right.

Secondly, As it is but just and reasonable to distinguish the *Clergy* of the *Christian Church*, from *Heathen Priests*; so it is neither just nor reasonable, to make the personal Faults of some, the ground of a Libel against all. There have been always, and still are among the *Christian Clergy*, Persons eminent as for outward Quality and Birth; so for Education and good Breeding, Learning and natural Parts, Virtue and Piety, and other praise-worthy Things, as much as among any other Set of Men whatsoever, which makes a contempt of the Order in general very unreasonable, to say no worse of it. Why a *Clergyman*, having those good Qualities for which others in other Stations are deservedly esteem'd, should be despis'd, is unaccountable. That a Gown and Habit should lessen real Merit; that human Infirmities, innocent Weaknesses, and little Humours, should be excusable in one sort of Men, but odious in another, are not from Reason, but from Partiality and Prejudice, which no modest Person will venture to defend.

Thirdly, Whatever may be thought of the Men abstractly, yet there is all Reason to pay some Honour and Respect to them, for their Order and Office sake, which are of Divine Institution, as any that is not blinded with Prejudice, may clearly see both in the Old and New Testament. Wherefore to despise the Order and Office, or Persons for the Order and Office sake, is indeed to despise God himself, to insult his Authority, and to impeach his Wisdom, which are Crimes every one should be afraid of.

Fourthly, As the Divine Institution of the Order and Office, should skreen the Priests and Ministers of the Gospel from Contempt, so the End and Uses of the Institution is a solid Reason for having them in due Esteem, and for giving them all suitable Encouragement. For the Evangelical Ministry or Priesthood aims at a greater Good, than all other Orders and Offices whatsoever, and the Benefit of it goes beyond this Life, whereas the Use and Benefit of all other are confin'd to it. 'This is the Means which the Wisdom of God has appointed for communicating and preserving the Knowledge of himself and Will, for curing the depravation of Human Nature, for conveying his Grace and Spirit, and for bringing Men to eternal Life. * *For after that, in the Wisdom of God, the World by Wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe.* Again it is said, † *He gave some Apostles, and some Prophets,*

* 1 Cor. i. 21. † Ephes. iv. 11, &c.

and some Evangelists, and some Pastors and Teachers, for the perfecting the Saints, for the work of the Ministry, for the edifying the Body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the Faith and Knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect Man, unto the Measure of the Stature of the fulness of Christ. Now if the Ministry be, by the special appointment of God, the ordinary Means of Grace, Knowledge, Holiness and Perfection here, and of Salvation and eternal Life hereafter, should the Ministry be despised? Or is it good Sense for any to do it, that pretends to have a value for these Things, or to aim at them? I wish there was less reason to speak against some particular Men, but to speak against the Office, can never be justified. And to have it in Derision, is both an affront upon God, and an open Contempt of these great spiritual and eternal Blessings, which God offers to us by this means. A true Sense, and sincere Desire of these, will be always followed with a due Respect to those who have the dispensing the Means. And if this be wanting, the other may be concluded wanting too. As certainly the Custom of despising the Clergy, will at last introduce a Contempt of the Ministry it self, and also of all that is either proposed or conveyed by it. So that they who as yet abhor Atheism and Irreligion, and dread either the falling into it themselves, or of being the Instruments of promoting it among others, ought to be most shy of throwing Contempt upon the Clergy.

Fifthly,

Fifthly, As the having the Clergy in Contempt and Derision, discourageth such from taking the Office upon them, as are most proper to keep up the Dignity, and to answer the End and Uses of it; so when the Clergy happen to be really Contemptible, it is no Matter for Jestings, nor a fit Subject for sport and profane Mirth. It is truly Matter of Mourning, and should alarm People, that both outward and spiritual Judgments are approaching. For certainly it is a Presage of them, if there be any Credit to be given to Scripture, or any Measure to be taken from either its Precepts or Examples. For it is obvious to every serious and sincere Observer of *holy Scripture*, that the *Priests* and *Ministers* of Religion, are appointed as for other Ends and Uses, so to be a kind of *Intercessors* betwixt God and the People, to deprecate his Wrath and just Displeasure, and to turn away Judgments which are threatned and deserved. Then *the Priests, the Ministers of the Lord, should weep before the Altar, and say, spare thy People O Lord, and give not thine Inheritance to Reproach*, upon which God does promise to *pity his People*. But if they who should stand in *the Gap* are not able, if they who should intercede, are themselves most obnoxious, how deplorable is the Case of that People? Further, does not our Lord call his Ministers *the Light of the World*, and *the Salt of the Earth*. Now if the Light should prove Darkness, how great must be the Darkness throughout? And if the Salt should lose its flavour, as it is then good for nothing but to be cast

cast out, how then should that be preserved, which was to have been salted ?

Let Prejudices be laid aside, and let both the present State of the World be viewed impartially, and also the History of past Times duly considered, and 'twill appear that not only Piety and Virtue, but Knowledge, Sense and Learning keep pace with the Clergy. It would be Impudent, as well as Injurious, to confine these Things to the Clergy, or to deny others an equal Capacity of them, and even as large a share of them when they endeavour it, and are resolv'd upon it. But so it is *de facto*, that now and always the Priests or Clergy were the Standard, for knowing whether these Things flourished, or were in decay.

I shall add but one Thing more upon this Head, *viz.* that commonly it is the fate of the best Clergy to be treated worst, and most abused. St. Paul's Entertainment among the *Corinthians*, is an Instance, and also an Historical Type, or Emblematical Glass, for representing to those who walk in his Spirit, and who endeavour to follow his Steps, what they may expect. St. Paul was an Apostle, and not *behind the chiefest of the Apostles* in Gifts, Graces, and all suitable Qualifications for the *Work of the Ministry* : Nor was he less zealous, for he laboured as much as any, yea, he *laboured more abundantly than they all*; nor was there the least ground for suspecting him of any sinister End, for he refused even that which was reasonable, and which he might have taken lawfully, for making

king good his *Motto*, *I seek not yours, but you.* In a word, *He did very gladly spend, and was still ready to be spent for them.* Now how was he requited? Even *the more abundantly he loved, the less he was loved,* they undervalued him, and counted *his bodily Presence weak, and his Speech Contemptible.* Whereas at the same Time *they suffered Fools gladly,* as he upbraided them; for he tells them plainly, *ye suffer if a Man bring you into Bondage, if a Man devour you, if a Man take of you, if a Man exalt himself, if a Man smite you on the Face.* For so did the false Teachers serve them, whom yet they encourag'd.

How applicable is this to the Church and Clergy of *England*? Take her according to her Constitution, no Church so modest and reasonable. She pretends to no Infallibility, she assumes no Sovereign Power, she sets up no Rabbies, nor has any private Mans Person in excessive Admiration, as is done almost among all other Parties. This Church has been always illustrious in her Clergy, who were never behind any of their Contemporaries, without exception. And since the Reformation, there have been no where Persons more eminent for true Piety, for solid Learning, for good Sense, for strenuous Reasoning, and for perswasive Eloquence. Nor can it be said, that they Lord it over the People, or treat them Magisterially, as others do, who make a false Shew of more Humility. For some are not contented, unless Reason be laid aside, and they followed with implicit Faith: They do not take their
 People

People by the Hand to guide them, but use a despotick Authority. Our Pulpits are raised for the conveniency of Speaking and Hearing; but others use theirs as Chairs of infallible Authority, and absolute Power, which must not be contradicted. We are taught and commanded by our Preaching, so to divide the Word of God aright, by distinguishing carefully what is Necessary, what is Fundamental, and what is enjoin'd as subservient Helps and Means, that every one may see the Nature and Reason of their Duty, and so that their Religion may be a *reasonable Service*, and not a *blind Superstition*. But there are others, who make a heavy Yoke of every Thing, and do impose with all Rigour, their own political Devices, to maintain their Party and Interest. By the Practice of the Church of *England*, it is shameful to come up to the Pulpit, without any Thing that is not well premeditated and suitable to the Occasion: Whereas others make *bawling* and *noisy fervent Nonsense*, good Preaching. In a Word, the Clergy of this Church do generally, as it is required of them, treat their People as Men, who should see with their own Eyes, hear with their own Ears, and understand with their Hearts; whereas most others use their Followers as Children, and even worse. And yet all this is required with Contempt, Reproaches, and odious Characters, as if our Church was the worst, and our Clergy generally the vilest of any. No Clergy have less Encouragement from the People of their own Communion, nor are any more virulently attack'd

attack'd by Adversaries, especially the Enemies of all Religion. Now the Reason why we are so much more the Object of their Spite and Malice, is, because we give them the greatest Resistance? They throw out the foulest Reproaches upon us, to obstruct the Efficacy of our Teaching, and to divert People from the Consideration of the Truth of our Doctrine, the Excellency of our Worship and Constitution, which once received, would force Atheism and Irreligion to hide themselves : For they know by Experience, that raising Prejudices against Persons, will beget a Prejudice against all that is recommended by them, though never so good in it self. A Scripture Proof will not have weight enough with *Free - thinkers* , I shall therefore conclude this Point with a Saying of *Plutarch*. *Envy and Detraction and Prejudice, are in no Case good, but always a great Impediment to what is so ; yet no where worse, than when they are made the Bosom-friends and Counsellors of an Hearer, because they represent the best Things to him, as unpleasant and impertinent, and Men in such Circumstances are pleased with nothing less, than what best deserves their Applause.*

XXXV. Having begun a general Libel against the Clergy, he proceeds to particular Proofs, P. 47. The first of which is *variety of Opinions*, by which *Priests throughout the Universe are endlessly divided*. He still puts the *Christian Clergy*,

or *Ministers of the Gospel*, in the same *Class* with *Pagan Priests*, for making them alike Contemptible. But to let that pass. It is not denyed but that there are different Opinions among the *Clergie*, which is Reason for a fair, serious Examination; but it is no Reason for entertaining any Prejudice either against the Clergy or Religion, as this Author intends it.

First, Variety of Sentiments ought not to be objected against the *Clergie*, as this Man does here, and in other Places; nor is it a reasonable ground of Prejudice against them. For there is no less variety of Opinions and Sentiments among all other Parties of Mankind. *Philosophers*, *Historians*, and *Physicians*, differ as widely from one another. *Lawyers* not only contradict one another at the *Bar*, when they are under the Obligation of *Fees*: But also in *Books*, when they are at Liberty to speak freely, and to utter their genuine undisguised Thoughts. Nay, even *Mathematicians*, who go upon Demonstration, are not all of the same Mind, but have also their Debates. Must therefore all these several Professions be discarded? Is there no Use of them? Should they who follow them, have no Respect, nor be trusted in any Thing they say? If any will argue after this Manner, whether seriously, or out of Design, he should have a Place in *Bedlam* to think quietly by himself, without the Disturbance of the different Opinions of others.

He has thought very little, and has never considered much, who takes Offence at Mens
different

different Opinions; for it is naturally unavoidable, because there are different *Sizes* of Souls, as well as of Bodies, and each *Size* has a different Capacity; and so one cannot reach so far as another, and consequently having different Views of Things, there must be some different Accounts of them. Besides, every one is born with a different Constitution and Temper, which produce different Passions and Inclinations, which have a great Influence on the Understanding and Judgment. Moreover, different Education, and the different Engagements which are early upon Men, make an Impression upon their Faculties, and give a turn to different Thoughts. But nothing runs Scholars and learned Men into different Opinions, so much as a fond Desire after *new, uncommon, and odd Things*, that they may be thought to have penetrated farther than vulgar Souls. Hence it is that there are so many different *Seets*, and that even the Followers of the same *Seet* do in some Thing or other, differ from the Author. So that the different Opinions among *Divines*, do only shew them Men of like Passions and Infirmities with others. And yet after all, this difference among *Divines*, is more in Appearance than Reality, arising from *Words* and *Terms* which are understood differently according to the *Idioms* of the Language of their several Countries, and the *Principles* of the different Philosophers which they follow.

In the next Place, as the different Opinions of *Divines* is no reasonable ground of Prejudice against them; so it should be made no Prejudice
against

against Religion it self. He does not think wisely, who concludes from this, that Religion is neither true nor certain, nor much to be regarded. Should the knowledge of *Nature*, and *natural Things* be laid aside, because Philosophers have different Opinions about these Matters? Should we shut our Eyes upon the admirable Beauty, the wonderful Order and Harmony of this *visible World*, because *Ptolemy*, *Copernicus*, and *Tychobrah*y give us different *Systems*? Or should *History* be neglected, because *Historians* differ about diverse Passages? The true Inference from these different Opinions among the *Divines* of either different Churches, or of one and the same Church, is that the true Knowledge of God and Religion, is not to be got without Pains and Labour, much Study, and serious Enquiries, and deep Meditation. * *If, saith Solomon, thou incline thine Ear unto Wisdom, and apply thy Heart to Understanding : yea, if thou cryest after Knowledge, and liftest up thy Voice for Understanding; if thou seekest her as Silver, and searchest for her, as for hid Treasures. Then shalt thou understand the Fear of the Lord, and find the Knowledge of God.* This is the Method, and such Pains must every one be at, who desires the saving Knowledge of God and Religion. And they who refuse it, are not worthy of it. *He that will not labour, saith St. Paul, should not eat.* And if the Food of the Body, be worth the Sweat of our Brow, sure that of the

Soul deserves it more. Sin was the Cause why we were put under these Difficulties for maintaining both natural and spiritual Life. And as the Goodness of God useth even his just Punishments, for the Advantage of them who humbly submit to him, so he wisely continues these Difficulties of finding Truth, for the exercise of our Faculties, which is the Means of improving and enlarging them; and he permits so many different Opinions, for trying the Sincerity and Strength of our Desire after the Knowledge of himself, as also to give us a better Taste of Truth, to make it dearer and more valuable. For Truth makes a deeper Impression on the Mind, and is better understood, when it is learned by Meditation, serious Enquiry, and full Examination. *There must be also Heresies among you, saith the Apostle, that they which are approved, may be made manifest among you,* 1 Cor. xi. 19.

XXXVI. P. 97. It is said, *even the Christian Priests have been always, and still are divided in their Notions of a Deity.* And so he goes on for two or three Leaves, to shew their disagreement about *the Nature, Essence, and Attributes* of God. He might with as much Truth and Honesty have said, that they are not agreed about his Existence: Nor would that have raised greater Prejudices in the ignorant, weak and inconsiderate against Religion, than to say or suggest, that *Christian Priests* know not whom, nor what they worship. But whatever was the Principle or Motive of this Charge, it is altogether

ther false and groundless. For it is most evident by the *Confessions* and *Articles of Faith*, published by the several *Churches* now in the World, which I suppose none will deny to have been penned by Clergy-men, I say, it is evident that all *Christian Divines* every where are perfectly united in the *Belief* of one and the same true God, that they all own his *Essence* to be *Spiritual*, and his *Nature* to be *Infinite*, and *absolutely Perfect*, and do all acknowledge the same *individual Attributes* of *Eternity*, *Omnipotence*, *Omniscience*, *Goodness*, *Mercy*, *Truth*, *Justice*, and *Incomprehensibility*; As also that he did create the World, and does still govern it by a most wise and wonderful Providence, though in some Instances mysterious and obscure to us. And as this is the plain certain Doctrine of all *Christian Divines* now, among whom I do not reckon *Socinians*; so it has been proved, and still can be easily made out, that 'twas the current Doctrine of the Catholick Church through all Ages; and whosoever dissented from this, were marked as Heretical, as the *Anthropomorphites* who were not many; for their Notions were too gross to continue long, or to spread far.

It is true, some tax *Tertullian* with thinking God *Material*, but I believe, when his Notion is fairly examined, 'twill be found, that *Material* refers to *Substance*, and not to *Body*. Nor is there any difference between Dr. *Clark*, and the late Dr. *More*, about the *spiritual Essence* of God, for both acknowledge it *Immaterial*, but their difference may be in the Philosophical Noti-

on of *Extension*, which the one according to *Cartesius*, may hold to be all one with *Matter*, or the *Essence* of it, but which is denied by Dr. *More* with good Reason, and even Demonstration, because there is *Extension* without *Matter*, and so he may think it a property of a *Spirit*, as well as of a *Body*. That definition of a *Spirit*, or immaterial Being, which is in this Place quoted from Dr. *More's Divine Dialogues*, is not to be found in the Place, where he delivers the Notion of a *Spirit*, and I doubt if it be any where in his Writings, or if these Words *without Solidity* be used, 'twill plainly appear, that *Solidity* is not *Reality*, but *Corporeity*: For Dr. *More* was not capable of that Nonsense, as to say, that a *Spirit was an extended Nothing*.

As the Nature and Essence of God are not doubtful, whether *Extention* be essential to *Matter*, or may also be common to *Spirits*; so neither are his *Attributes* rendred uncertain, by the difference between the *Arminians* and *Calvinists*; for they do not debate any Attribute of God, but only the Consequences which may be drawn from some of them, and how some intricate Matters may be explained. Nor is it any wonder that Men speak differently, when they venture to speak of Things above their Comprehension, and take upon them to determine positively, what does not clearly appear, but which in a great Measure is kept secret. How many earthly and visible Things, are inexplicable by Human Reason? And how should this be sufficient to resolve all the hidden Transactions of God, whose Judgments

ments are unsearchable, and his Ways past finding out! His Way is in the Sea, his Path in deep Waters, and his Footsteps cannot be known.

XXXVII. P. 52. This Author brings in *Brahmins*, *Persees*, *Bonzes*, and *Talapoins* pretending to *Divine Scripture*, as well as Christian Priests. But does he think that they have as good Authority for these *pretended Scriptures*, as we for the *Holy Bible*? Have they who wrote and deliver'd them as good Credentials, as *Moses* and the *Prophets*, *Jesus Christ* and his *Apostles*? Has the Providence of God been as wonderfully seen in the preservation of these Scriptures, as in that of *Ours*? Are there as many Divine and Human Testimonies to the Truth of them? Are they as worthy of God? Do the Doctrine and Declarations in them, make equally for the Glory of God, and lay as good and solid Foundation for the Peace and Comfort of Men? Or is he insensible that our *Bible* does this effectually? I wish there was not so much ground for suspecting this. For how could one that has any due Sense of the Truth and Excellency of our *Holy Scripture*, treat it so irreverently, as to rank it with obscure *Shasters*, ridiculous *Zundavastawes*, and a nonsensical *Alcoran*, without the least honourable Mark of Distinction? It is deplorable, that there should be so many threw'd Signs of gross Infidelity, in the midst of so many Means, and while there is so much Opportunity for coming to the Knowledge of the Truth. How many excellent Treatises have been writ-

ten in former Times, and also of late Years, even in our own vulgar Language, for settling the *Canon of Scripture*, for proving its *Truth and Authority*, and for clearing the *integrity of Books and Text*, to make it a sure, as well as the only *Rule of Faith and Guide* to eternal Life? Can any reasonable, impartial Free-thinker ask more, for his Satisfaction in these important Matters, than what is offered by *Grotius* in his *little Treatise of the Truth of Religion*, together with his own *Notes*, the Reverend Bishop *Stillingfleet* in his *Origenes Sacrae*, and the Reverend Dr. *Jenkins* in his last *Edition of the reasonableness of the Christian Religion*? These, and there are many accurate Treatises besides these, are sufficient to convince all that are not hardened with Prejudices, that *our Scripture* contains the true and sincere *Word of God*, and so ought to be esteem'd above all Books, which any in any part of the World can pretend to. He that cannot see *Light by this*, is incapable of perceiving it.

XXXVIII. But alas! who are to be blamed for shaking the Authority of this *Divine Book*, for confounding the Peoples Minds with Doubts and Scruples about it, and for perplexing and debating its Doctrine? They are even the *Christian Clergy*, if this Author is to be believed. For he charges them with it *P. 53.* and carries on the Charge for almost three Sheets together. And how does he make out this heavy Charge? By a Collection of *Quotations*, which as they are set down, look very *oddly*; but I am sure
were

were never gathered nor published to help or encourage *Free-thinking* in the right Sense, but rather to hinder it. By these *Quotations* it appears, that the Author has turned over a great many Books : But by them it appears also, that he has done it not to better his Mind, or to clear his Understanding, but to encrease his Prejudices against Truth and Religion, and to humour his Malice against the Clergy. I cannot but liken him to the *Hotentots*, for as these silly People get into all the Ships which arrive at the *Cape of Good Hope*, but only to fetch *Soot* and *Grease*, as all the Ornaments which they are fond of, are offensive to the rest of Mankind. So this Author reads Books only for the *Trash* of them, and is well pleased with all that is unfavoury to others. If he find any Thing weak, or indiscreetly said, which can hardly have a good Meaning, or which may be perverted and wrested to a bad Sense and Purpose, this is greedily caught, and away he runs with it. Nor is he easie till he expose it, though he thereby gives Offence to all good and sober Persons.

Who expects Infallibility from Persons not inspir'd? What Man has not his weakness? Who is it that reasons justly and exactly at all Times, and on all Subjects? How easily may an inconsiderate Thought, an improper Word, an indiscreet Expression slip in, when Men are haranguing or declaiming, arguing in Passion, or prosecuting a Topick by Fancy, and a heated Imagination? Then Men are not upon their Guard,

but say many Things which cannot endure the Test. And should these Instances of human frailty be exposed, to blemish the Memory and Character of Persons otherwise very deserving? Would it not be better to conceal and pass them over?

I do not say this, as if I thought all the Quotations of this Author genuine and true, and that they could not be otherwise justified. On the contrary, I am perswaded that they are neither fair nor faithful, being only distant *Words* and *Sentences* drawn together, and a malicious *Turn* given to them, for making them speak what the Author never intended: Or else *broken Passages* separate from *others*, which would have not only qualified them, but also overturned the Design of this Discourse. So that this Author has done more Prejudice to himself by his many Quotations, than to those from whom he takes them; because by them he sometimes discovers his Ignorance, and at other Times want of Candour and Honesty.

To examine all his Quotations would be tedious, and would run out this Discourse too far. I shall therefore mark only two or three relating to the *Scripture*, and shall wave what concerns some particular *Doctrines*, because the Discourses which are to follow that lately published, will oblige me to consider them.

XXXIX. The first of our Divines whom this Man introduces, giving a *mean*, yea, *odious* Character of our *holy Books*, is the Reverend Bishop
Taylor,

Taylor, in his *Liberty of Prophecyng*, a Book which gave great Offence when first published. If I be not mistaken, Dr. *Hammond* among others answered it. And Dr. *Taylor* was so ingenuous as to answer himself too in a *new Edition*, and to own, that he had no Intention to shake the Catholick and received Doctrine of the Church, nor to promote Licentiousness either in Opinion or Practice : But only to expose the Tyranny of the *Church of Rome*, for their unreasonable *Impositions*, and to shew the impertinent *Dogmaticalness* of some other *Sects* in Questions, subtile, difficult and unnecessary, that by this Means all might be perswaded to lay aside that Stiffness, which is both uneasy to ones Self, and to others, and to put on a mild, soft Temper of bearing with one another in Matters not fundamental, or not easily determined. His Aim and Design was to curb and divert the Rage and Fury of the various *Sects* then started up against the Church, and against one another. And because all boasted of having *Scripture on their Side*, and produced Texts in favour of their peremptory Decisions, this led him naturally to consider *the difficulty and uncertainty of Arguments from Scripture, in Questions not simply necessary, not literally determined*, which he doth Sect. III. The Quotations brought by this Author, are out of this Section, but drawn both with palpable Disingenuity, and most injuriously to the Bishop. He pretends to give an *Idea* of our *Holy Books* from *Divines themselves*, and yet he passes over the *first Paragraph* of this *Section*, where
the

the Bishop gives a true and plain *Character* of *Scripture*, and proposes the true Use of it, and instead of this, which was only to the Purpose, he runs up and down picking up loose Passages, which were intended chiefly to expose the foolish conceit of some, who expected that *Scripture* would resolve all their subtle, curious and unnecessary Questions. Did he not see this first Paragraph? Or was it not intelligible, because of a Sentence or two of *Greek* and *Latin*? Is this a fair and honest Treatment of the Bishop? Is it not a plain Proof, that he never intended to give his Readers a candid Information? Now because he hath omitted this, I will transcribe it, that every one may judge of this Authors Integrity, and of the Bishops esteem of our *Bible*.

“ God who disposes of all Things sweetly,
 “ and according to the Nature and Capacity of
 “ Things and Persons, had made those only
 “ necessary, which he had taken care should be
 “ sufficiently propounded to all Persons, of whom
 “ he required the explicit Belief. And therefore
 “ all the Articles of Faith are clearly and plain-
 “ ly set down in *Scripture*, and the Gospel is
 “ not hid, *nisi pereuntibus*, that is, *to them that*
 “ *are lost*, saith *St. Paul*; Πασὺς γὰρ ἀρετῆς παρεκλήσιν
 “ καὶ χάριτος ἀπάσης τεσσὼν ἐν ταύταις ἐνείσχυται, that is, *we*
 “ *find or may find in them*, viz. the *Scriptures*,
 “ *a persuasive Instruction* of all Virtue and Good-
 “ nefs, and an admonitory *Preservative from*
 “ *all Evil or Wickedness*, saith *Damascen*, and
 “ that so manifestly, that no Man can be igno-
 “ rant of the foundation of Faith, without his
 “ own

“ own apparent Fault. And this is acknowledg-
 “ ed by all wise and good Men, and is evident,
 “ besides the reasonableness of the Thing, in
 “ the Testimonies of Saints, *Austin, Hierom,*
 “ *Cbrysoftom, Fulgentius, Hugo de sancto Victo-*
 “ *re, Theodoret, Lactantius, Theophilus Anti-*
 “ *ochenus, Aquinas,* and the later *Schoolmen.*
 “ And God hath done more, for many Things
 “ which are only Profitable, are also set down
 “ so plainly, that (as *St. Austin* says) *nemo inde*
 “ *haurire non possit, si modo ad hauriendum de-*
 “ *vote ac pie accedat.* But of such Things,
 “ there is no Question commenced in Christen-
 “ dom, and if there were, it cannot but be a
 “ Crime and human Interest, that are the Au-
 “ thors of such Disputes, and therefore these can-
 “ not be simple Errors, but always Heresies, be-
 “ cause the Principle of them is a personal Sin.

The Bishop having thus clearly asserted the plainness, the fulness, the sufficiency and perfection of *Scripture*, with respect to the true End of it, he then proceeds to the Refutation of those who expected that *Scripture* should resolve all curious, subtle, and unnecessary Questions. Now he does not this in a close, rational, and argumentative Way: But rhetorically indulging Fancy, and giving free scope to Imagination, which was as strong and fertile in him, as ever in any Man. And when one taketh the Liberty to speak or write after this Manner, neither Thoughts nor Expressions are well guarded, as it must be confess'd, that some of the Bishops both here and in other Places, are a little

tle loose and unwary, and what taking them by themselves, and in all their Latitude, are too liable to be wrested to an ill Purpose. But then Reason and Justice require the understanding Mens Words, according to their own Meaning and Purpose, and suitably to the End and Occasion of uttering them, and not to take Advantage of them to their Prejudice. If this Author had intended honestly to present the World with an *Idea of the Nature of our Holy Books* from Bishop Taylor, he would not have taken it from this Place, where he treats of it only occasionally, and by the by as 'twere : But he would have consulted his *Doctor Dubitantium*, where it is handled expressly, and with full Satisfaction, viz. B. ii. Ch. iii. Rule xiv. and there is also B. i. Ch. iv. R. ii. a *Demonstration* of the Christian Religion, which I with this Author and his fellow Free-thinkers would read and consider. It is short, and not above three Sheets or thereabout, but it baffles Incredulity, and is sufficient to stop the Mouths of Atheists and Infidels for ever.

As this Author has been injurious to Bishop Taylor here, so P. 131. by a Quotation out of his *Letter of Friendship*, as I shall shew when I come to that Place.

XL. The Quotations about the *Canon of Scripture*, P. 26, &c. do likewise shew but little candour; for they are brought to render the *Canon* of Scripture *uncertain*, whereas they only prove the *Time uncertain*, when the *Canon* was concerted, and generally received, which is a quite different

different Thing, and does not at all derogate from the Authority of the *Canon*, nor of any Book in it. And if there had been any regard to Truth or fair Dealing, this Author would have added to these *Quotations*, others from the same *Reverend Persons*, for informing the Reader how they settled the *Canon*, and proved the Divine Authority of those Books, of which the *Canon* is composed, to shew what Respect is due to it, and how much to be relied on. For it is in no wise fair, to take notice of the Doubts and Difficulties which Men confess, and to conceal their Solutions of them. * But this Mans business is not to teach Truth, and to quiet Peoples Minds, but to fill them with Scruples and Prejudices.

Now whereas he produces these *Quotations* as Objections against the Clergy, I leave it to every one to judge, whether it does not rather make for their Honour; for it shews their Honesty, in that they do not conceal Truths that are seemingly disadvantageous, and so there is no Reason to suspect their imposing upon People. Again, as this declares the honesty of our present Divines, so from this Account, they give of the *Books* received into the *Canon of Scripture*, it appears how cautious and circumspect the Primitive Church was, how careful to distinguish the *Writings* of those who were truly inspired from others, that only pretended to Inspiration: So that they have delivered down to us, only what they themselves received, and were well assured, was from the Apostles; and indeed no

* See *Cosins* and *Richardson* of the *Canon of Scripture*.

Book in the World was ever so well attested, neither can be proved so authentick as the Scripture. And as it hath all the outward Testimonies that can be desired to recommend it, so the Doctrine and Contents shew so much of the Wisdom of God, that it is impossible to have been written without the Inspiration of his Spirit. Let the Quintessence of all *Human Writings* be extracted, and 'twill be nothing in comparison of that which the Scripture teacheth of God and of Man, though most of the Penmen were without Learning, or liberal Education.

XLI. These Quotations, P. 28. about *various Readings* of the *N. T.* cannot with any candour be objected against the Clergy in general, nor yet those particular Persons mentioned. They may prove that the Clergy are Learned and Inquisitive; but they are no Proof, that they intend to render the *Text of Scripture precarious*, as they are here unjustly charged.

The objecting *various Readings*, may amuse and shake the simple and inconsiderate, but it cannot surprize them that wisely and duly consider, nor yet be an Occasion of their stumbling. For what wonder is it, that there should be different Readings of a *Book* so often transcrib'd and translated into all the Languages of the World? I have been told, that if one was curious to compare our *Laws* and *Acts of Parliament*, in the *Records* of the *Tower*, with the several printed Editions of them, and with the citation of Judges and Lawyers, the *Variations* of them would be

be very many, and essential, which is more surprising.

Whether there be so many *Variations* as are pretended, I know not, nor shall I ever be at the Pains to reckon them. But this I know, that there are very few material, and that none of them destroy any *Matter of Fact*, on which the Truth of the *Christian Religion* is founded, neither do they alter any essential Point of Doctrine. I mean, admitting all particular Variations, the whole of our Religion stands firm : Because what may be dubious in one Place, is clearly proved in another.

I shall give an Instance of two *Texts*, which the *Socinians* make a great bustle about, but which yielded to them, would not shake the *Catholic Doctrine* against them. The first is 1 Tim. iii. 16. *Without Controversie, great is the Mystery of Godliness : God was manifest in the Flesh.* This is the common and most received *Reading*. But they contend that it should be, *which was manifest in the Flesh*, referring it to *Mystery*. Now suppose it should be so, will that render the Incarnation of the Son of God, or the Divinity of Christ uncertain? How many Texts are there which prove them, though this were out of the way? Does not the same Apostle say elsewhere as much? When he saith, *He that was in the Form of God, took upon him the Form of a Servant.* And again, that *God gave his Son to be born of a Woman.* And doth not St. John say, that *the Word which was God, was made Flesh?* And cannot the same be cleared from many other Texts. Another

Another Text, which is an Eye-sore to the Socinians, is 1 *Job. v. 7. There are Three that bear Record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these Three are One.* Therefore they will not allow this to be a genuine; but only a spurious Text, because it is omitted in some Copies; but admitting there were material Objections against this Text, as there are none; and let it be expunged altogether, what would follow? Will the Doctrine of the Unity of the Godhead, and of the Trinity of Persons fall to the Ground? It cannot be said, that this Doctrine is only suggested by this Text, seeing the great Objection against this Text is, that the *Fathers* did not use it. But setting aside this Text, as the Unity of the Godhead is asserted from *Genesis*, to the *Revelation*, so is not the *Trinity of Persons* declared by the Manifestation when *Jesus* was baptized, by the common *Form of Baptism*, by the Benediction of *St. Paul*, by these Words, *I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of Truth*, and by a great many more Texts and Passages, which make the Mystery certain and plain, as it is incomprehensible.

So the *various Readings* neither do, nor are intended to render the *Text of Scripture precarious*. They serve to fix and clear it, by shewing the *Tradition* of it, and by them it appears that the *Books* of the *New Testament* are no Forgery, and also uncorrupted in all their essential Parts, whether Historical or Doctrinal. And this was

confirm'd to me by that *Learned Critick*, who published Dr. *Mills* N. T. in *Amsterdam*, while he had these *Variations* under his Consideration. And if he has said any such Thing in his Preface, which I hop'd and expected, this Author cannot be excused for omitting the Intimation.

As for the *Old Testament*, the *Variations* of the *Hebrew Copy* are few and inconsiderable. The *Rabbies* make different Glosses, but do not disagree much about the Letter. And indeed their Care of the *Letter* is wonderfully exact, for they allow no *Copy* of the *Law* and the *Prophets*, till both every *Word* and *Letter* be strictly and nicely examined in their *Synagogue*, in the presence of Rulers and Rabbies, and other learned Men. And if this was the constant Custom of that People, as in all likelihood 'twas, for it is well known how tenacious they are of Customs, then there is all assurance that the *Old Testament* has been most faithfully preserv'd, as 'twas written by *Moses* and the *Prophets*, and that some bold *Criticisms* of *Father Simon*, and some others about *Repetitions* and *Transpositions* are groundless.

XLII. But to return to the Quotations of this Author. There is certainly no regard to be had to them, that is, they are upon his Word alone never to be believed, true or genuine, after that which he says, P. 90. as from Dr. *Mills*, where his Disingenuity and Malice both to the Gospel and Ministers, are most apparent.

To make this Falseness go down with careless Readers, he quotes the Page of Dr. *Mills Prolegomena*, but did not dare to give the Words. And if he had been cunning enough, neither would he have mentioned the Page, and then his Falseness had been undiscovered by many. For this Book is not in every ones Hand, and few would have been at the Pains to read over 48 Sheets for one single Passage, if they had not known it before.

Here he says, 1st, that Dr. *Mills* has discover'd a Passage very little known before. By these Words, one would think, that Dr. *Mills* propos'd something which he believed, and would have others receive as a Truth. Whereas the Doctor delivers it as a Thing which could not be true, and gives evident Reasons for his Assertion. 2^{dly}, He says, that this Passage gives an Account of a general Alteration of the four Gospels in the sixth Century. But suppose the Passage was true, it only implies a particular alteration at Constantinople, and that but of one Copy too. 3^{dly}, He translates the Passage thus, *In the Consulship of Messala, at the command of the Emperor Anastasius, the Holy Gospels, as written by Idiot Evangelists, are corrected and amended.* If he was ever at Westminister, or Eaton Schools, and had then given such a Translation, he must know that he would have been whipt as an Idiot indeed. For every Boy knows, that *Idiota* does signifie one Unlearned, and not a Fool, which perhaps he knew well enough; but to have translated it right, would have spoil'd his prophane Jest.

I will transcribe the whole Passage from Dr. *Mills*, that all may be satisfied where the Truth lies, and it is as follows.*——“ But it is yet more “ strange, what *Victor Tunurensis* reports of the “ Emperor *Anastasius* in his *Chronicon*, An. Chr. “ DVI. viz. *That during the Consulship of Messala at Constantinople, the holy Gospels written by unlearned Evangelists, were by the command of the Emperor, corrected and amended, whence this Author had this, I know not. This indeed may be probable enough, that the Sophists and other Masters of Rhetorick, not liking the rough and unpolite Stile of the*

* Sed & magis adhuc mirum, quod de Anastasio refert Victor Tunurensis in Chronico Anno Christi DVI. *Messala* v. c. *Coff. Constantinopoli*, Inquit, *Jubente Imperatore, sancta Evangelia, tanquam ab idiotis Evangelistis composita, reprehenduntur & emendantur?* Unde hæc desumpserit auctor iste, Nescio. Illud quidem satis probabile est. Sophistas istius urbis aliosque dicendi Magistros, quibus haud parum fastidita forte erat Evangelici styli Barbaries, apud Imperatorem egisse, ut Evangeliorum Historiam de novo conficiendam, & sermone puriore Græco exprimendam curaret, Levemque & Impium principem, eorum Male sanis Consiliis eousq; fuisse obsecutum ut serio cogitaret de hac Evangeliorum Reformatione, seu etiam forte opus ipsius Inchoaret. Verum hujus modi Evangelia nulla usquam in publicum prodiisse tam certum est, quam quod Certissimum. Ipsum Nomen sane Novorum Evangeliorum, dici haud potest quantas per Universum Orientem excitaturum fuisset Tragedias, quam graves Tumultus, nec fortasse sine Imperatoris ipsius Cæde sopiendos. Sed ut prospere & ex voto successerit ipsi hoc facinus, certe si Evangelia hæc, eorumve particulæ aliquæ evolassent in Vulgus, fieri non potest quin Historici ad unum omnes, qui reliqua *Anastasi* flagitia enarrarunt, etiam hoc longe super alia memorabile graphice suisque omnino coloribus depingerent. Cum tamen apud eos altum sit de hac re silentium, neque exstet, quod sciam, ex omni Scriptorum Turba, præter unum Victorem, quæque verba ejus transcripsit, *Isidorum Hispalensem*, qui *perægritas* hujus aliquam faciat mentionem, *Proleg. p. xcviij.*

“ Gospel, may have used their Interest with the
 “ Emperor, that the History of the Gospel might
 “ be set forth a-new in a purer Greek Dialect.
 “ and that the easie and wicked Emperor might
 “ have so far hearkned to their mad Counsel, as
 “ to think in earnest of this Reformation of the
 “ Gospel, and even perhaps to begin it. But
 “ that such Gospels did never any where ap-
 “ pear, is so certain, that nothing can be more
 “ certain. Truly it cannot be express’d, what
 “ Tragedies the very Name of new Gospels
 “ would have occasioned throughout all the *East*,
 “ how many, and how great Tumults it would
 “ have raised, which perhaps would never have
 “ been quieted, but by the Murder of the Em-
 “ peror. But however this bold and wicked
 “ Enterprize might go on privately, certain-
 “ ly if either these Gospels, or any Part of them,
 “ had taken Air, and come among the People,
 “ it was impossible but all the Historians of these
 “ Times, even to a Man, who have reckoned
 “ up all the other wicked Deeds of *Anastasius*,
 “ would also have mentioned this, which is
 “ much worse than the rest, and set it forth in
 “ its true Colours, whereas there is in all of
 “ them, a profound Silence of this Matter. Nor
 “ is there any one of the whole Tribe of Wri-
 “ ters, that I know, who takes the least notice
 “ of this intended Adulteration of the Gospel,
 “ besides this one *Victor*, and another *Isidore*
 “ *Hispalensis*, who has transcribed it from him.

Now as it is here clear that Dr. *Mills* did not
 at all believe, that such an alteration of the Gos-
 pel

pel was set a foot, or forwarded ; so nothing is more evident, than that no such pretended corrected Edition of the Gospels is now Extant, neither ever was used in any part of the Christian Church ; but both ancient and modern Copies of the *New Testament*, as well as the rest of Scripture, shew the native and original Simplicity of the Penmen.

And let this simplicity of Stile appear to some never so barbarous, yet all who duly consider, will prefer it to the eloquence of either *Demosthenes* or *Thucydides*. The Apostles in preaching the Gospel, did not use the *enticing Words of Mans Wisdom*, nor did they write according to the artificial Rules of Rhetorick in vogue, because they had no Design of catching Men *by guile*, nor of drawing others after them *with the Excellency of Speech, or with the Wisdom of Words*, as the *Sophists* of the World used to do, and as is still done by cunning Men : But suitably to their Character, they endeavoured to make Converts only by a naked Representation of the Truth, and giving a plain Conviction of it. Therefore to them that will consider it, the Style as well as the Matter of Scripture, must be by the Inspiration of God, for if the Penmen of Scripture had been writing *cunningly devised Fables*, or what they wrote out of their own Heads, they would have written more like Men, that is, as Men did then, and do still for the most part, they would have minded chiefly the pleasing Men, and so studied Art and Amusement, acceptable Words, and fine Expressions,

sions, what might tickle the Ear, affect the Fancy, humour the Passions, or which might strike in with their Opinions and Interest, which would only have rendred the Truth less evident, and more debateable. It may pass for a Paradox with some, but I will take upon me to say it, and can make it out, that no Book was ever written with more accuracy than the Scripture, if it be accuracy to answer the End, to keep close to the Purpose, and to perswade effectually, such as are attentive. Therefore all human Corrections and Amendinents would but spoil it.

XLIII. The 8th Instance of the Conduct of the Clergy, P. 91. shews that this Author objects against them for Objections sake, right or wrong, even against his own Principles, as well as common Reason. For who would have thought that one who sets up for *Free-thinking*, and professes it, would have made it a Fault to tell People what *Atheists*, *Deists*, *Scepticks* and *Socinians* say? But the secret Disgust at this Conduct is, that they answer their Arguments, and expose the Weakness of them, so that the Readers are furnished with Defences against all private Attacks.

XLIV. The 9th Instance is yet more Impertinent, for poor *Creech* was no Clergyman when he published *Lucretius*. He was only a young *Batchelor* of *Arts*, nor did those Persons whom he reflects on, any more than recommend the

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Translation and the Poetry. They were neither so prophane, nor so senseless, as to be in love with *Lucretius* Systeme or Principles, at least this may be said of the Men.

Having this Occasion, I judge my self obliged to declare my Thoughts about the studying *Heathen Authors*, which has been long in Vogue, and which some do to an excess. I do own that there may be some good Use made of it, and that it is in some Cases necessary. But I do own too, that there is here, and every where, a *Nimium* of it, which has been very prejudicial to Religion, I mean, to Mens Sense of it, by tying them down to the Notions of meer natural Men, and drawing them off from the Light of Revelation. And I cannot but say, that it is very unbecoming *Divines*, to be more Conversant with *Heathen Authors and Books*, than with *Holy Scripture*, which only can make the *Man of God perfect* and qualified for his Function, and by it too, he may become wiser than all these *Ancients*. There is no Temptation to leave the *Scripture*, and to turn to Heathen Authors, for sublime Thoughts, elegant Figures, emphatical Expressions, admirable Instances of true irresistible Eloquence, and for Matter of wise Observation, and judicious Criticism of all kinds; for I will be bold to advance another seeming Paradox, that there are more and greater Instances of these in *Scripture*, than in all Heathen Philosophers, Orators or Poets, which would also appear more, if Persons applied themselves

heartily to the study of it, by the Motive of serious and sincere Devotion.

XLV. P. 92. There is an Attack made upon our present *Translation* of the Bible to lessen the Credit of it, which is much upon the Matter with forbidding the reading of it, or trusting to it, and so the Generality shall be without the benefit of Scripture, for they are not capable of consulting the Original Languages.

We do not pretend that this *Translation* was made and carried on, as *Aristeus* says the Septuagint was, which would give an equal Authority with the Original; nor do we say that the *Translators* were immediately inspir'd. We own them to have been Men liable to Mistakes, and so this Work of theirs, like all Human Works, no doubt is capable of being amended in diverse Places. But neither can it be denyed, that they were good and serious Men, and well qualified for the Work, and so certainly had that Divine Assistance which is promised to all Christians, and which every one may expect who asks it, and who sets about any good Enterprize for the Glory of God, and the Good of his Church, as this was. And therefore they have committed no essential Mistakes. Nay, take it altogether, *Text and Marginal Readings*, it may be defended as equal to, and even better than any *Modern* or *Ancient Translation*. If I remember right, Dr. *Pocock* who was a good Judge, has often said so. Nor can any doubt it who reads the *Translators Preface* to this *Translation*, where
they

they give an Account of their Diligence, Care and Faithfulness, which ought to have been always printed with the Bible it self, for assuring the Hearts of those who read it. And certainly the Omission, which is only for saving a little Paper, is a great Fault in the *Printers* and *Booksellers*, as the suffering it, is a great Oversight in our Bishops and Rulers.

As to the Exceptions which this Author makes against our present Translation, they are very Ignorant and Impertinent. *First*, He finds Fault that the Word *Ecclesia* is rendred differently, sometime *Church*, and sometime *Assembly*, and not always *Assembly* or *Congregation*. But to have done so, would have obscured the Sense and Meaning of the Text. Who does not know, that *Ecclesia* according to its first and original Acceptation, signifies any Congregation or Assembly? But who may not see also that Jesus Christ and the Penmen of the *New Testament*, have appropriated the Word, to signify that particular Body of Men, who are united to Jesus Christ by Faith and Profession, who have him for their *Head*, and who are under the Direction of others sent by him. So *Apostle* was at first any *Messenger*, as *Episcopus* or *Bishop* was a common Term for any who had the Care or Oversight of Persons, or Things. But would he now speak properly or plainly? Or would he not confound the present distinct Conceptions of People, who should call *Envoy* *Apostles*, or the *Governors of Forts* *Bishops*? So our *Translators* render *Ecclesia Church*, when it means *Believers in Christ*

Christ united in a Body, according to his Institution and Appointment; but thought it not proper to call a Heathen Assembly by that Name, as *Acts* xix. 32. This is too serious an Answer to him, who only aimed at an irreligious Jest. But I write, to take away the Suspicions of others more sincere.

Secondly, It was no *pious Fraud*, nor any *Fraud* at all, nor any Imposition to insert *God*, *Acts* vii. 59. for whether they had any Authority for it from any *Copy MS.* or printed, which is more than he knows, it is clearly implied, and to be understood, because no where in Scripture, there is any approved Instance of praying or paying Divine Worship to any besides the true God. And this has been always alledged as one proof of the Divinity of Jesus Christ, that St. *Stephen* here, while he was full of the Holy Ghost, prayed to him, and commended his Spirit unto him.

Thirdly, It is Injurious and Malicious, what he says about the putting *Overseers* instead of *Bishops*, *Acts* xx. 28. for all that know *Greek* and *English*, must know that they mean the same. But *Overseers* was more proper in that Place, because giving to the unlearned English a clearer Notion of the Office which is there pointed at, and alluded to. And if it had been *Bishops*, nothing could have been inferred from it to the Degradation of Episcopacy, nor yet was it a Proof that a *Scripture Bishop*, was not a *Diocesan Bishop*, or one that had Presbyters or other Clergy under him. For they to whom the Apostle was then

then speaking, were not the Clergy of *Ephesus* alone, but they were the other Bishops of *Asia* also, whom *St. Paul* desired to meet him there, because he had no Time to visit them severally. This is ancient and universal Tradition, as is also the Order and Government of Episcopacy, of which his *true Christian and Protestant, and great Free-thinker Mr. Chillingworth*, has given a Demonstration in few Words, as many others have done more largely, so that the Controversie may be at an End, if some People could be satisfied with Reason and Evidence. I shall say nothing of it here, but only what is little observed, that 'twas very agreeable to the Wisdom of God, to make the Order and Economy of the Church, to answer his other Economy for governing the World, which makes different Ranks and Orders absolutely necessary; that so there might be Persons fit, even by their outward Character and Quality, to instruct, admonish, and as there is Occasion, to reprove with all Authority, all sorts and degrees of Men.

Fourthly, As to the Postscripts of the *Second Epistle to Timothy*, and of that other to *Titus*. They are not put there as part of *Divine Scripture*, nor did our Reverend and Pious Translators write them as their own Notion and Conjecture, but as *Catholick Tradition*. For out of the Epistles themselves it can be proved, that *Timothy* and *Titus* were Bishops, the one of *Ephesus*, the other of *Crete*; and if there be any regard to the Authority of *Eusebius*, or which is more to universal and uncontroverted Tradition,

tion, they were the first Bishops of these two Cities. What occasion to debate these Matters in *Parliament*, I do not remember now; but as 'twas in the long *Rebellious Parliament*, so it is no matter of Wonder, that these Things were prov'd *bold and spurious Additions*, for there Impudence and Insolency were *Proofs*, nor was any Thing *Truth*, but what made for Rebellion, Faction, Schism, and Confusion, and what was against *Divine Institutions*.

I do not think it worth the while, to examine and consider what he says, *P. 94, &c.* about the Alteration of other Books. For who will say that Books are vitiated, when the Mistakes of them are corrected, or when false and dangerous Things are expunged. If this *Discourse of Free-thinking* had received such Correction from the Hands of some wise and good Men, 'twould have been not only good Service to the Publick, but a Kindness to the Author, by preventing the eternal Shame and Reproach which will be upon him, for publishing so many, not only silly, but false and impious Things.

XLVI. From *P. 99.* which begins Sect. III. he starts Objections, and makes Answers to them. But he has not committed that Fault which a little before he charged upon the Clergy, of proposing the Objections of Adversaries in all their force, which indeed is the fairest way. He has not been at any Pains, to find out true and real Objections, but only proposed some weak ones
out

out of his own Head, which might give Occasion to enlarge further upon his false and foolish Notions.

As I have already often said, there is no true reasonable Objection can be made against *Free-thinking*, if by it be meant a fair Examination of Evidences, or a serious sober Inquiry into the Nature and Reasons of such Matters as are proposed to be received. But as I have shewed too, there are many and great Objections against both his Notion and his Practice of *Free-thinking*.

P. 107. He makes this Objection, *That the Priests are set apart to think freely for the Laity, and are to be relied on as Lawyers, Physicians, &c. are in their several Faculties.* And the drift of his Answer is, not only to make the Priests or Clergy contemptible, but also to run down the Order and Office it self as impertinent, unnecessary, an useless Burden, and a clogg or hindrance to Free-thinking. And for giving the Colour of an Authority for his Notion, he quotes a Passage out of Mr. *Le Clerc's Bibliotheque Choisi*. It may be suspected that he himself was Mr. *Le Clerc's* Informer, and perhaps too the very Gentleman who made that *Reply*, which indeed is worthy to be laugh'd at, for there is neither Wit nor Sense in it. I believe that Mr. *Le Clerc* has told the Story for no other Reason, than to shew that there are *Fools*, and Men who think *oddly* against all Reason; for he has more Sense than to ridicule the Ministry in general, and could not be guilty of such a weakness of Thought, as to make a Jest of his own Office.

I have already touched such Things as give a sufficient Answer to all that is said here, which is downright Opposition to the Authority of God, and a flat Contradiction to his Wisdom. It is an opposition to Divine Authority, because nothing is more evident, than that God has established the Evangelical Priesthood or Ministry to continue for ever in the Church, that is, till the End of the World. And it contradicts Divine Wisdom, which has chosen this as the most effectual Method and Means for propagating and preserving the Knowledge of the Truth. Before the Law, God required Fathers and Masters of Families to do this Office, and to teach their Children, Servants, and others under their Care, as appears from *Gen. xviii. 19.* By *Moses* he separated the Tribe of *Levi* for this End, and ordained that *the Priests Lips should keep Knowledge, and that the People should seek the Law at his Mouth, because he is the Messenger of the Lord of Hosts, Mal. xi. 7.* Jesus Christ following this Conduct of Divine Wisdom, ordained Apostles and other Ministers to be *Stewards of the Mysteries of God*, and to be the Means of conveying the Heavenly Treasures of saving Knowledge. And they also ordained *Elders* or *Presbyters*, which are all one with *Priests*, whom this Man always mentions with Irony, for *Priests* is the Contraction of *Presbyter*. And because the Gospel was to continue till the End of the World, therefore the same Method is continued to this Day, and will be kept up by all who regard God or right Reason. For 'twould be blasphemous

phemous to compare this Mans Wisdom, with the Wisdom of God, or to put the Question which should be preferred and relied on.

This Author, and the Club he pleads for, may count this *Foolishness* : But the Wisdom is manifest to all who humbly behold it, and are disposed to observe it. For none are born with Treasures of Knowledge, and all must be ignorant unless they be taught, and how should they be taught, if there be none trained up to instruct them. The Clergy are not ordained to save the People from the trouble of Thinking, but only to help them to think right, and also to keep them in Mind of those necessary Truths which they have learned. There is no Question to be made of it, but that the Laity are every way as capable to find out Truth as the Clergy : But their Business and Employments do not allow them Time. Therefore it is wisely provided, that there should be *a Sett* of Men, whose particular Business it is to prepare what all should believe and observe. Many are capable of discerning Truths, when laid before them, that are not capable of finding them out by themselves : And so the Clergy are useful to bring People sooner, and more easily to the Knowledge of the Truth.

He says P. 109. *That Priests have no Interest to lead me to true Opinions, but only to the Opinions they have listed themselves to profess, and for the most part into mistaken Opinions.* But by his leave, it is both the Interest and Duty of Divines, to lead all into true Opinions, and why
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may not the Opinions be true, tho' they profess them? Is there no Sincerity in Profession? Must all be suspected, that are under any solemn Engagements? Is not this unreasonable and uncharitable? That there are many *mistaken Opinions*, cannot be denied: But this is only a Reason for a fair impartial Examination, it is no Reason for refusing to hear all and every one without Exception; nor ought there to be a greater Prejudice against one who has *listed himself* to profess only particular Opinions, than against another who has not yet declared himself what Church or Party he belongs to; for the Truth may be as little with this last, as the other: Nay, it is certain, that this Man cannot have it, otherwise he would join some or other who own it.

He says, P. 110. *That Men may chuse their own Priests, as they do their own Lawyers and Physicians.* And 'tis true, they are at liberty to do so, but then they ought to use this Liberty with a great deal of Caution, for a Mistake in chusing Religion and the Church, which is all one with what he calls *chusing the Priest*, is of greater Consequence, than the chusing an ignorant Lawyer, or unskilful Physician. And tho' Men are at liberty to join what particular Church they please, yet after that they have made their choice, they are under all Obligation to teach, profess, and defend its Doctrine. And if this be refused or opposed, that particular Church ought to inflict her Censures; for the Church must be allowed to have the Power of maintaining its self, which is proper to every Society.

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The Church, saith St. Paul, is the Pillar and Ground of Truth, and therefore she ought to oblige all her Members to profess and teach *sound Doctrine*. This is a solid Reason for *Creeds, Confessions, and Articles of Faith*, though they be great Grievances to this Author and his Club; for without them it is hardly possible to preserve the Unity and Purity of Faith. In the Days of the Apostles, there was a *Form of sound Words*, which St. Paul commanded Timothy to hold fast, to teach according to it, and to take care that those he ordained to be *Ministers* of the Church, should do the same. Our Lord bids all beware of false Prophets, and the Apostles forewarn us of the coming in of *Heresies* and *damnable Doctrines*, therefore there must be a Test for trying whether Men speak right, and according to Truth. The Scripture is the great Rule and Standard, but short Summaries are also necessary for both Clergy and Laity, that the one may know those necessary and fundamental Points which are to be taught, and that the other may be able to distinguish easily true Teachers from false. And there is also all Reason that the Church be well assured, that those who teach by her Authority, are of the same Mind, and that they will not corrupt her Doctrine. Certainly no Care is too great for preserving the Truth, and for preventing false Doctrine, neither of which can be done, if private Persons have liberty to advance whatever they please, and to utter all the Notions which come in their Head. It is true, some Churches impose Errors, and so to teach their

Doctrine, is to go contrary to Scripture. And for that Cause, there is an Obligation to try Churches, as well as particular Men, for knowing whether they *continue in the Doctrine of the Apostles*, which is the Standard of the true Church; for as there is but *one Church*, so that is built upon *the Foundation of the Prophets and Apostles*. And consequently that is only a part of the *one true Catholick and Apostolical Church*, which receives the *Apostles Doctrine*, neither adding to it, nor taking from it. And by this 'twill appear, that the Church of *Rome* has the least reason to pretend to be the only Church, and that all who are in Communion with our Church, do belong to that one true Church, of which *Salvation is the peculiar Priviledge*, as I shall God-willing demonstrate in another Discourse.

XLVII. P. 114. There is a Complaint of the Charge of supporting the Clergy, which he says is *a great Evil to Society*. This he knew would be a grateful Topick to many, as no doubt it pleased himself. I shall not answer this by the Command and Institution of God, nor the Reason of the Thing, nor shall I produce *St. Paul's Arguments*, 1 *Cor.* ix. all I shall say to this, is, that there is no Reason to complain of the Charge of maintaining the Clergy of this Kingdom, neither is it any Evil or Burden to the Nation; for they pay proportionably to all publick Taxes, and perhaps more, because commonly they are taxed very near, if not altogether according to the real value of their Livings. Again the
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Tythes out of which the Clergy are maintain'd, belong to none other, and the Clergy were in Possession of them before any present Proprietor, or his Predecessors had any Right to the Lands themselves. Nor in purchasing Lands, are the Tythes paid for; they are deducted, and so paying them to the Clergy, is only paying to Men what is due, and just as reasonable, as for a Tenant to pay the Rent of his Farm. Moreover, there is no Cause for grudging or envying the Clergy their Revenues, seeing they are not Hereditary to their private Families, as under the Mosaical Economy. Every Rank, every one of every Quality, from the highest to the lowest, have the Privilege of training up their Children for these Offices, and the Revenues belonging to them. And so they are not a Burden nor an Evil to the Nation, but a Temporal Advantage, because it finds Employments for so many Persons, and does encourage them with a certain reasonable Provision. This is sufficient to stop the Mouth of this Author, and such others who have no regard to the Divine Institution of the Ministry, nor any Sense of the spiritual Good to be got by it.

XLVIII. P. 114, and 115. This Author sets himself against all Speculations, meaning thereby *the Mysteries of Religion, and Matters of Faith*, and argues only for *Moral Duties*, which is sufficient for the Peace and Order of Human Society. Granting that no more was necessary to the Support of Human Societies, and to the

securing the Peace of them, yet how should that supersede *Matters of Faith*, if they be necessary to eternal Salvation? Is a quiet and peaceable Life here, all that one should aim at? *St. Paul* says, *without Faith it is impossible to please God*, and a greater than he has said, that *he who believes not is damned*; now can any who believes this, think *Matters of Faith*, *Matters of no Moment*, altogether unnecessary? Certainly he who pleads for *Morality* without *Faith*, or in opposition to the *Mysteries* of the *Christian Religion*, is an *Atheist* and *Infidel*, he believes not the *Gospel*, neither fears eternal *Damnation*, which can only be prevented by a true humble *Faith* which worketh by *Love*, and keeps the *Commandments*.

Morality is a part of *Christianity*, nor was there ever such a perfect *System of Morality* thought of by any *Philosopher*, as that which the *Gospel* teacheth, therefore they have but little *Sense* of the *Christian Religion*, who are regardless of *Morality*, and neither preach nor press it. But the *Christian Religion* should be proposed entire, and not mangled, and so *Faith* and the *Things* to be believed, should be preached too, otherwise there is more regard to *Man*, than *God*, and more *Concernment* for the present *Life*, than for that *Life* and *Immortality* which the *Gospel* has brought to *Light*.

It is a false and inconsiderate *Thought*, that the *Peace* and *Order* of *Human Society* depend wholly or mostly on the *Practice* of *moral Duties*; for these are the *Blessings* of *God*, the *Effects*

fects of his Providence, and the Testimonies of his Favour, which that Nation and People may be most assured of, who receive his Word and keep it. The Gospel or Kingdom of Christ, is truly a Divine *Palladium* to them who honour it, and use it aright.

Nor is there any Thing more false, than to say, as this Man does, that *imposing Speculations*, meaning true Matters of Faith, *does destroy the Practice of Morality*. For all the *Mysteries* of the Christian Religion, are *Mysteries of Godliness*, they are the surest Foundation of both Piety, and all moral Duties; nor is it possible to invent more forcible Arguments for perswading to the Practice of them. Can there be a greater Motive to Love, to Forgiveness, to the doing all manner of Good to others, than the stupendous love of God to Mankind in sending his Son? Can any behold Christ dying for us, and not feel the powerful Constraint to die to Sin, and to follow Righteousness? Can any Thing be more proper to cure Covetousness, which is the Root of all Evil, and to wean Mens Hearts from the inordinate Love of this World, which puts them upon many wicked Practices, I say, can any Thing be more proper for this, than the prospect of eternal Life? Will not the Contemplation of the many great and precious Promises of God by Christ, excite a sincere Desire to cleanse ones self from all Filthiness of the Flesh and Spirit, and to perfect Holiness in the fear of God? How then can it be said, that the preaching and pressing these Things, destroy or hinder the Practice of Mora-

lity, or cool the Zeal for it? No Topicks from Heathen Moralists have half the Force.

This Error of decrying Faith, and of advancing Morality to the Prejudice of it, has been obtaining gradually ever since the *Restoration*. It has been favoured and carried on by Men of different Principles, and who had different Designs in their Head. Some good well-meaning Persons, have been also deceived with the false Varnish spread over it. They are intangled with the same Snare, who are against the meddling with any Controversie, as if that was inconsistent with a Zeal or Regard for practical Piety. It is in vain to address *Archeists*, *Deists*, *Socinians*, and other Hereticks, nor yet *Worldly Politicians*: But I humbly entreat all sincere Christians, particularly my Brethren of the Clergy to beware of *Satan's secret Devices*, and particularly of this Error, which tends effectually to advance the Kingdom of Darkness, and to weaken the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, which is built upon Faith, neither can continue with us, unless Faith be preserved. Peace should be preached, but not to the Destruction of Truth. Morality should be taught, but not to the Prejudice of Faith. These two should be always joined together, nor indeed can they be put asunder; for it is a false Faith which is without Morality, and there is no true or acceptable Morality, which has not Faith for its Principle. It is the Duty of every faithful Minister, after the Example of *St. Paul*, to declare all the Counsel of God, otherwise he cannot be pure from the Blood of all Men.

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Therefore *Christ crucified* must be preach'd, and all the other Mysteries of the Gospel, how little soever some do like them : And also as Occasion offers, Controversies must be touched, for preserving our People from *damnable Doctrines*, for settling their Minds, that they may not be like Children tossed to and fro with every Wind of Doctrine, and that they may not be drawn, by the slight and craftiness of Deceivers, into an Indifferency about all Religions, and about all the Peculiarities of the Christian Religion, which is what this Author of Free-thinking drives at. But Controversies may be handled, without breaking the publick Peace, or raising Tumults, or stifling Charity. Debates are most effectual when they are without Bitterness, Heat, Railing, and the like Usage; but managed with Calmness, with Meekness, and fair Dealing, shewing that Truth, and not personal Prejudices, are the Motives of them.

XLIX. What is said of the *Streets* of *London*, P. 116. must be answered by my *Lord Mayor*, and the *Justices of Peace*. But that there are no Complaints, nor Reproofs of Immoralities and Wickedness from the *Pulpit*, as he alledges, the constant Hearers can prove the contrary. And so might he himself too, if he had frequented the Church, and been a devout Hearer of Sermons. But it is likely that he has withdrawn from them, out of his great contempt of Priests; yet it seems that he has had some Accounts of what was preached, for he mentions something

which does not please him. But whether he know it or not, *Immoralities* in his Sense, are not the only Thing to be reprov'd. Christians ought to consider not only what is *naturally Immoral*, but what is *Sinful* by the Revelation of the Gospel: and consequently when there is a Contempt of *Divine Ordinances and Institutions*, faithful Pastors ought to admonish the People of them, and reprove the contumacious Continuance in them. This Man has no Sense of *Baptism*, and makes no Difference betwixt it, and common *sprinkling with Water*: But we know that it is of great Importance, and is followed with most beneficial Effects, when rightly and duly performed. For one whom we have all reason to rely on, saith, *He that believes, and is baptized, shall be saved.* And therefore there is all Reason to restrain and suppress the irregular and disorderly Administration of it. A Priest or Minister of the Gospel is with him a *Word of Contempt and Object of Derision*, because he pays no Respect to the Gospel; should therefore they who violate the Order, and usurp the Office, pass without Reproof? Our Reproofs indeed are not very effectual with him, and many others, but we are commanded to Teach, to Instruct, to Exhort, and Rebuke *with all Authority*, whatever may be the Success. For it is written, *And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, for they are a rebellious House, yet shall know that there hath been a Prophet among them,* Ezek. ii. 5.

L. P. 117. He says, *nothing tends more, nor*
so

so much to the encrease and union of a Sect, as the Toleration of Vice and Wickedness to as great a Degree as they can. And for the Honour of the Christian Religion, he gives this as the only Motive, why *Constantine the Great* embraced it, for he had committed such horrible Villanies, as could not be expiated by the Pagan Religion. And all this he has from *Zosimus*, a Heathen Historian, and a most bitter Enemy to *Constantine*, and the Christian Religion, not only sparing nothing that might cast any Reflection upon them, but inventing and stretching every Thing that might render either of them odious. I might bring in *Eusebius*, *Evagrius* and *Nicephorus Calistus* against *Zosimus*, and other Persons of good Credit. But I will not engage my self at this Time, in the Defence of *Constantine*, whose Conduct I allow cannot be altogether justified. He was certainly guilty of some ill Things, and might be somewhat Superstitious : But his greatest Crime both with *Zosimus*, and this Author, was the embracing the Christian Religion, and encouraging it. See *Dr. Crakenthorps* Defence of *Constantine*.

As to that Reproach of our Religion, which he quotes from that wicked *Apostate Julian*, we are so far from concealing it, or from thinking it a shameful Thing, that we preach it as Tydings of great Joy, that our Religion can expiate Crimes which no other Religion can do, and that the Favour is offered to all without Exception. And tho' this Man has no Sense of it at present, yet if it should please God to touch his

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Conscience, and to open his Eyes that he may see his present Errors, he would be glad to find that *saying faithful and true*, as it is certainly *worthy of all Acceptation*, that *Jesus Christ came to the World to save Sinners, even the chief*, and that *through him forgiveness of Sin is preached to every one, as that by him all that believe are justified from all Things, from which they could not be justified even by the Law of Moses*. This Doctrine is comfortable, as well as true, and none will despise it, but *Solomons Fools* who *make a Mock at Sin*.

And yet our Religion is holy and strict, far above all the Religions that ever were in the World. The *Pagan Religions* did all of them indulge Vice; and the Acts of Worship, which some of them enjoin'd, were Acts of Immorality and Wickedness. It is therefore absurd, and ridiculous to say, that *Constantines Crimes* were too great for continuing him among the *Pagans*; for he was not worse than *Tiberius*, *Domitian*, nor even *Augustus*, suppose all was true that *Zosimus* saith. But the Christian Religion giveth no Dispensation to Sin, neither any Encouragement to continue in it. It offereth Pardon, but only to the Penitent, who breaks off the course of Sin, and sets himself to repair the Dishonour he has done to God, and the Injuries to Men. *When the wicked Man forsakes his Ways, and the unrighteous Man his Thoughts, and when he turns to the Lord*, then it is that *God will have Mercy upon him, and abundantly pardon him*. Which I doubt not, but that *Egyptian Bishop* who
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baptised *Constantine*, was so honest as to lay before him, for he was converted long before.

LI. P. 123. Here begins the List of his *Heroes* for *Free-thinking*, the first of whom is *Socrates*. No doubt he was a great Man in these Days, if either *Plato* or *Zenophon* may be relied on. And therefore I will not fully his Character, by the remembrance of some Things he is charg'd with. I wish there was not so much Reason, to upbraid the generality of those who profess Christianity with *Socrates* and some other *Heathens*: For it is a shame for *Christians* to be short of the Virtues of *Heathens*, when their Religion obliges to exceed them, by giving a clearer Light, greater Helps, and more Encouragements. The Righteousness of a *Heathen* will not save a *Christian*, and therefore we must study to be better than even *Socrates*. *Erasmus* spoke these Words, *sancte Socrates ora pro nobis*, by way of Irony to mock the Custom of praying to any *Saint*, especially such pretended *Saints*, as were not so good by far as *Socrates*. What is here reported of *Socrates* by *Erasmus*, is indeed very becoming a Christian, viz. *I have truly done my best Endeavours to please God, and have good Hopes he will accept of them*. Nay, then a Christian ought not to make a doubt of it, as it seems *Socrates* did, by saying, whether God will approve of the Actions of my Life, I know not. For we know that God will approve of all that sincerely do their best. Let this Author examine his Conscience, whether he has
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imitated this for which he commends *Socrates*. Will he, or dare he say, that by writing this Book he intended sincerely, and did his best endeavour to please God? out of his own Mouth he shall be condemned.

There is a Quotation in this Paragraph from *Justin Martyr* falsely rendred, and which is liable to be perverted. They who would know the true Sense of that *Father*, may see it cleared in the *Notes* of the Reverend Mr. *Reeves* upon *Justin Martyr's Apology*, Par. xli. p. 83. Before I leave *Socrates*, I cannot but observe that he is none of this Authors *Free-thinkers*, even by his own Account of him, for it clearly appears that he believed a God, had a great Veneration for him, and was mightily supported with his dark views of another Life.

LII. And there was as little Reason for mentioning *Plato*, if there be such agreement betwixt his Notions and Christianity, as is pretended. But the agreement is more in appearance, than Reality. And it has done the *Christian Religion* no small disservice, to represent it as *Platonism*, and to explain some of its Mysteries, by the Notions and Principles of *Plato*; For whatever resemblance there may be in the sound of Words, which has deceived some, the Sense and Matter when duly examined, will be found very different. The *Fathers* have been lately fully vindicated from the Charge of *Platonism* by Monsieur *Baltus*, and the Apostles were so fully taught first by their Master, and after-

afterwards by the Inspiration of the Holy Ghost, that they had no Occasion, neither were under any Temptation, for going to Heathen Schools. But I think it very probable, that *Plato* has been acquainted with some Jewish Priests, and with the Books of the Old Testament, and has drawn some of his Notions from them; for they seem to be built upon *Divine Traditions*, which he like a Philosopher has adventured to refine, and by that means has altered and perverted them. However, tho' *Plato* might have no esteem of the *Religions* practised then, yet he was no *Atheist*. He believed a God, and a Providence, and had some expectation of another Life, and so does not stand right here among such *Free-thinkers* as this Man honours.

LIII. *Epicurus* indeed shall be allowed to be a *Free-thinker* in any Sense of this Author. And his System of Philosophy which has the least of solid Reason, and good Sense in it, can only be the Foundation for such *Free-thinking*, as this Book pleads for. But I shall not trouble my self at this Time, either with the Refutation of his *System*, or the Examination of his Character, which was various too, as appears by *Diogenes Laertius* and others. I shall only mark a gross Falsehood, and as gross an Instance of Disingenuity in this Author in this Place, which I promised P. 76. First to raise the Reputation of *Epicurus*, he detracts from the Excellency of our *holy Religion*, by denying that it requires such a high Degree of the virtue of
Friendship,

Friendship, as *Epicurus* does. Again, to make this false Accusation pass, he avouches the Authority of Bishop *Taylor*, and brings him in saying, that *the word Friendship in the Sense we commonly mean by it, is not so much as nam'd in the New Testament, and our Religion takes no notice of it.* And so on for some Lines. But according to his wonted Custom, he disingenuously conceals what immediately follows, where that Reverend Person declares, that though the Name be not taken notice of, the Thing is, and both effectually recommended and carried to a higher pitch, than ever any Heathen dream'd of. The Bishops words are, *By Friendship I suppose, you mean, the greatest Love, and the greatest Usefulness, and the most open Communication, and the noblest Sufferings, and the most exemplar Faithfulness, and the severest Truth, and the heartiest Counsel, and the greatest Union of Minds, of which brave Men and Women are capable.* But then I must tell you, that *Christianity bath new christned it, and calls this Charity.* A little afterwards, *Christian Charity is Friendship to all the World, and when Friendships were the noblest Things in the World, Charity was little, like the Sun drawn in at a Chink, or his Beams drawn into the centre of a Burning-glass; but Christian Charity is Friendship expanded, like the face of the Sun, when it mounts above the Eastern Hills.* Again, *But when Christianity came to renew our Nature, and to restore our Laws, and to encrease her Priviledges, and to make her Aptness to become Religion, then*

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it was declared, that our Friendships were to be as universal as our Conversation, that is, actual to all with whom we converse, and potentially extended unto those with whom we did not. For he who was to treat his Enemies with Forgiveness and Prayers, and Love and Beneficence, was indeed to have no Enemies, and to have all Friends. Taylors *Disc. of Friendship*. Now did *Epicurus* ever carry Friendship so high, or half so far? How mean are all those boasted Friendships of the Heathens, in comparison of this? How little to be admired, is an intimacy betwixt two, or among a few Persons of like Constitution and Temper, having the same Education, Inclinations, and Interest, and where mutual good Offices have passed, and are expected? But to Love every other Man as ones self, to be anxious and active for the good of those who never laid an Obligation, and are altogether incapable of making any Return, and who besides Human Nature, have no Merit; this is a Perfection which neither *Epicurus*, nor any other Philosopher ever dream'd of, and which can be learn'd only from the Example and Precepts of Jesus Christ.

LIV. Among other great Names, which this Author uses, for setting off his Notion of Free-thinking, is *Cicero*, P. 135. whose true Character he pretends to give. But it is such as blackens his Memory, and contradicts the Sentiments of all that ever read him before. For though every Body believed *Cicero* to be above the Superstition

stitution of these Times he lived in, yet all have thought that he owned a God, and was well pleased with the Notion that the Soul was Immortal. There are two Treatises of his in every School-boys Hand, viz. *Somnium Scipionis*, and *de senectute*, where *Cicero* expresses a fondness for the Opinion of the Souls Immortality, and seems to comfort himself with the hopes of meeting with *Cato*, and other great Men in the other World. And if all this was Dissimulation, as this Man would have it, *Cicero* must sink in his Reputation, and it is no great Matter who have best Right to him, nor of what Side he is. I do not doubt but that there will be many Advocates for *Cicero*, who will restore his Honour, and wipe off those Aspersions which are here cast upon him, to make *Priests* throw him aside, who sometimes used him to very good Purpose against such as this Author. I might also shew how injurious he is to others, whom he sets forth as *Free-thinkers*, that is, as he takes it, laughing at Religion, neither believing God nor another Life.

LV. But nothing can be more surprising, than the placing *Solomon* among them, which he does, P. 150. whether this be from profound Ignorance, or from the height of Impudence, I leave others to judge, but one of them it must be. For if this was done honestly and sincerely, we must then suppose, that the Books of *Solomon* were never read, or that there was no grain of Sense for understanding them, or a shameful Neglect

lect and Contempt of the Means for penetrating into the Knowledge of them. And if 'twas not so, what Impudence to impose upon the World a Thing so notoriously false, and which every one is capable to discover?

Solomon is here charged with holding *the Eternity of the World*, and with *arguing against a Future State*. The Proofs are some mis-understood Texts of *Ecclesiastes*, which indeed prove the Truth of these Words of *St. Peter*, *They that are unlearned and unstable wrest the Scripture unto their own Destruction*, II Pet. iii. 16. This Man complains of the Ignorance of Priests in their Representation of *Cicero*, in that they do not distinguish his own Opinions, from those he makes another say in order to be refuted. What he falsely accuses others of with respect to *Cicero*, he is guilty of, manifestly in Reference to *Solomon* and this Book of *Ecclesiastes*.

The Scope of this Book is to take Men off from the inordinate Love of the World, and to persuade them of the vanity and meer amusement of all Things under the Sun, abstracted from the Consideration of God and Religion: It is to enforce what *Solomon* makes the *Conclusion* of all Searches and Experiences, viz. that *the fear of God, and keeping his Commandments, is the whole of Man*. So it is according to the Original, and the meaning is, that it is Mans whole Concernment, the chief Thing to be proposed and minded for securing either Temporal Peace, or Eternal Happiness. And for giving a full and clear Conviction of this Important Matter, *So-*

Solomon obviates all or most Things which sensual and worldly Men usually objected, or which Human Reason might suggest against a God, or Providence, or the Fears of future Judgment. So that several Texts of this Book do not contain *Divine Truths*, but only the Doubts and Sentiments of the Unbelievers, who stumbled at the present mysterious Proceedings of Providence. All which ought to be carefully observed, otherwise the true Sense and Meaning of this Book can never be reach'd. But though some particular Texts may be easily mistaken by the ignorant and inadvertent Reader, yet none can be so ignorant or inadvertent, as to think by this Book, that *Solomon* was an Atheist, that he believed the World, and all Things in it Eternal, or that he denied or doubted a future State. For though there be some obscure Texts in this Book, yet there are others so clear, that he who runs may read them, nor can any read them without seeing that *Solomon* had a deep Sense of God, of the Creation, of an universal and particular Providence, of another Life after this, and of a Judgment also, to which every one must answer. If he believed the World Eternal, how came he to forget himself, and say, *Remember thy Creator?* If he had no Prospect beyond the Grave, what necessity of remembering the Creator *in the Days of Youth*, before *the evil Days come*, and *the Years draw nigh when thou shalt say, I have no Pleasure in them*, meaning thereby *Old Age*, which disables one from both Bodily and Spiritual Exercises, and so renders him

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uncapable of redeeming Time, and of repairing past Neglects and Losses. And what need of repairing them, if there be no *After State*, neither Rewards nor Punishments hereafter. If *Solomon* had either doubted or disbelieved another Life, or a *Judgment* in that Life, he would have spared that *Sarcasm* with which he closes Ch. xi. and which he makes an Introduction to his conclusive Exhortation. *Rejoice O ye young Man in thy Youth, and let thy Heart cheer thee in the Days of thy Youth, and walk in the ways of thy Heart, and in the sight of thine Eyes: But know thou, that for all these Things God will bring thee to Judgment.* And by *Judgment* cannot be meant any Thing in this Life, because he had observed before, Ch. ix. that commonly here there is *one Event to the Righteous, and to the Wicked.*

These are so clear Suppositions, and such strong Insinuations of another Life, that any may be convinc'd that *Solomon* was far from doubting it, and much less would he argue against it. And if we read and consider his *Proverbs*, we can have no more Suspicion of this Matter. I shall mention but one, *viz. The Righteous hath hope in his Death*, Prov. xiv. 32. for what tolerable Sense can be put upon these Words, if there be no State after Death? For Hope does not look backwards, it always has a Respect to something to come. And Death damps and destroys the Hope of the Righteous, as well as of the Wicked, in regard of all present worldly Concerns; if therefore the *Righteous have Hope*

in his Death, it is built upon the Faith of Immortality and eternal Life.

For excusing his harsh Sentiments of *Solomon*, he has some *Marginal Notes*, to prove that the *Jews* were altogether ignorant of a Future Life, that the Notion of Immortality was a noble Invention of the *Egyptians*, according to Sir *John Marsham*. This is indeed Sir *Johns* Opinion, and also of some others who have a Name among the Learned. So *Grotius* thinks, that the *Jews* learned the Notion of another Life in their Captivity. But great Men have their Failings, wise Men have some Impertinencies, and learned Men their Mistakes. They sometimes Sleep, and commit gross Blunders : And it is their Misfortune, that their Mistakes and Blunders are sooner pick'd up, than their useful Instructions. Now as to this Opinion, it is groundless, built upon Prejudices and inadvertent Observations. I know no solid Argument to support it, and there are many strong and unanswerable Arguments against it. It is indeed said, that *Jesus Christ brought Life and Immortality to Light*, but by this is meant, the full clear and certain Revelation of both the Truth and Nature of immortal Life, and not at all of the first Intimation and Discovery : For it is acknowledged by all, nor can it be denied by any, but that there was some Knowledge and Belief of it before. And whatever *Marsham* and *Grotius*, and others from them may say, and setting aside at present the decisive Authority of *St. Paul*, and of *Jesus Christ* himself, there is much more probability

bability that the *Gentiles* had this Notion from the *Jews*, than that *these* received it from *them*.

For whether the Knowledge of Immortality, and of another Life after this, proceeded from *Revelation* or *Reason*, the Advantage is on the *Jews* Side. The *Gentiles* had no Revelation, the *Jews* had many; and so there is all Reason to believe, that this important Truth was communicated to them, at least more than to others. If *Reason* alone might suggest the Thoughts of another Life, why should not the *Jews* entertain them: For they had among them Men of as great Reason, and of as contemplative Spirits as in any *Nation*, nay, more than any Nation can boast of. Grant that the Generality of the *Jews* were as rude and barbarous, as dull and stupid, and ignorant, as some are pleased to represent them; yet sure, the *Patriarchs* and *Prophets*, *Moses*, *David* and *Solomon*, exceed all the *Philosophers* and *Heroes* of the *Heathens*, as they had many more Occurrences to start the Thoughts, and to put them upon the enquiry of another Life. Can we think so great Men who had the Vision of Angels, and diverse Revelations, had never a Thought beyond the Grave? Is it probable that they who were so devoted to God, and who had so frequent intercourse with him, could have no desire to live with him for ever? Or that God who honoured them with the Title of *Friends*, and spoke to them *Face to Face*, would have concealed from them the greatest Joy, the greatest Satisfaction, and the greatest

Comfort? Wherefore denying the *Jews* the Knowledge of a Future State, is derogatory to the Character of so great Men, and to the love of God towards them.

But who can or should now doubt it, after what *St. Paul* saith, *Heb. xi.* where he plainly proves, that the Patriarchs, Prophets, and other great Men of the *Jews*, lived in the Faith and Hope of a *better Country*, than any upon Earth. And does not our Saviour both refute the Errors of the *Sadducees*, and reprove their Ignorance of the Scriptures which taught the Truth? What though these *heavy Dunces* could not see the Emphasis of *the Letter of the Law*, and the Consequences to be drawn from it? Must therefore *David* and *Solomon*, and other great Men, be thought ignorant of these Things? Wherefore certainly *Solomon* cannot be charged with either doubting or denying a Future State. And nothing can be more injurious to his Memory, than to say that he believed and asserted the *World's Eternity*: For this is to accuse him of the grossest Atheism and Infidelity, disbelieving *Moses*, who writes the *History of the Creation*, contradicting *the Law* which confirms it, and opposing the Evidence of *particular Manifestations* made to himself. None can have such Sentiments of this great Man, but they who have little regard to the Authority of Holy Scripture.

LVI. As this Author has mis-represented *Solomon*, so the holy Prophets, P. 153. he would seem to raise their Authority and Character, but
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in effect depresses it, by the Account of their *Education* and *Method* of getting the *Prophetick Spirit*. He quotes *Dodwell* for this. But it must be confess'd, that even *that learned and good Man* entertain'd many singular and groundless Conceits. He read more than he well digested, and in most of his Books, there are precarious and imprudent Assertions, which this Man, and other Enemies to Religion have catch'd to serve Purposes, which good Mr. *Dodwell* abhorr'd : I am sorry to cast any Blot upon his Memory ; but Truth and Religion must not suffer for any Mans sake.

The *Prophetick Spirit* was not the effect of either *Musick* or *Wine*, neither did it come by any natural or artificial Means. The *Pagan Priests* did by such Means, work themselves into Ecstasies for amusing the People, and colouring their Pretence to Inspiration. But the Spirit of God came freely upon the holy Prophets, nor did it cause Tremblings, Shakings, or other ecstasical Motions : It left them sedate, calm, and undisturb'd in their Minds though full of holy Zeal. And because turbulent Passions, and inward Disorders did hinder the Spirit, and render one incapable in some Measure for receiving it, therefore *Musick*, *Vocal* and *Instrumental*, were used to compose their Passions, to beget a serene Temper of Mind, and to excite such cheerful Devotion, as was proper and necessary to prepare them for the Illumination and Influences of the Divine Spirit.

P. 154. He says, *that the Prophets have written with as great Liberty against the establish'd Religion of the Jews, (which the People look'd on as the Institution of God himself) as if they believ'd 'twas all Imposture.* And did not the Prophets believe, that the *establish'd Religion* was the *Institution of God*? Will he accuse them of thinking *Moses* an Impostor? Or can any think that the Spirit of God would inspire Persons to expostulate with himself, and to condemn his Conduct? Yet this must be thought and said, if we say that the Prophets wrote against *the establish'd Religion*. No, they only reprov'd the corrupt Practices of the *Jews*, and their un sincere Observance of the *establish'd Religion*. And yet it might be said, *To what Purpose is the Multitude of your Sacrifices? Who bath requir'd this at your Hand?* For the Multitude of Sacrifices are to no Purpose, if there be *no easing to do Evil, and learning to do Well.* Nor did God require *New-moons and Sabbaths*, in Opposition to *Judgment, Mercy, and Righteousness.* When a Minister of the Gospel reproves the *Profession of Christianity* without the Practice, and Zeal for *Sacraments and Ordinances*, wherethere is no Care for *Righteousness and good Works*, should he be interpreted as mocking *Christianity* it self, and as if he denyed the Divine Institution of *Sacraments*?

Nor did the *Prophets* write against the *Priests*, as the *Author of the Rights of the Christian Church* does against the present Clergy. For the Prophets reprov'd the Vices of the *Priests* then, their

their Degeneracy, and the common Abuses of their Office, and the undue Usurpation of it; and many of their Invectives are against *the Priests and Prophets of Baal*, which is but little observed. Whereas *the Author of the Rights*, &c. together with this *Author*, make no Distinction betwixt true and false Priests, and take occasion of some personal Faults, to run down the Office and Order.

LVII. Next to the Prophets he places *Josephus*, only because of some Passages which contradict sacred History. And his *Quotations* from *Josephus* are taken from *L'Estrange's* Translation, which is not exact, but rather a Paraphrase, where a Liberty is taken by *L' Estrange* to put a Gloss, which makes *Josephus* speak more than his Words would bear. Whether this Translator was one of our *Authors Free-thinkers*, I leave it to others. But as to *Josephus* himself, it cannot be denied, but that in some *Relations*, he differs from *sacred Scripture*; yet who can plead his single and private Authority against Scripture? And who can think that he could give a better Account of Transactions so long before him, than those who were present, and both commanded by God to write them, and also had divine Assistance in the doing it. Whatever might move *Josephus* to write as he did, if he had taken that liberty before the *Sanhedrim* and *Jewish State* were dissolved, he would have been cast out of the *Synagogue*. Yet *Josephus* does not contradict *Scripture* so much as some think,
neither

neither does he detract from the Miracles of it. As for Instance, this Author makes *Josephus* represent the Passage of the Israelites through the Red Sea, as nothing Miraculous, because like that of *Alexander* at the Pamphilian Sea. Now it is true, that there was nothing unusual in this Passage of *Alexander*, as *Plutarch* * reports it from *Alexanders* own Epistles: But *Plutarch* tells too, that many Historians made no less than a Miracle of it, which led *Josephus* into the Error. Nor was there any absurdity in his thinking, that the like Miracle might be repeated in Favour of One whom God raised to subdue the Persian Empire. But he gives such an Account of the Passage thro' the Red Sea, as makes it clear, that he believed it Miraculous, and would have others receive it as such. He indeed says in the Conclusion, *Let every one judge of these Things as he thinks fit*, which has not that Innuendo which this Author gives it; for these Words do not refer to the Israelites Passage through the Red Sea, as if either the Truth of that Passage, or the miraculous Manner of it was to be questioned: But the Words are to be referred either to *Alexanders* passing the Pamphilian Sea, or to his own Explication of that Miracle to render it credible. Neither does he deny the History of *Nebuchadnezzar*, according to the Relation of *Daniel*, if his whole Account be considered. But there being no Obligation to justify every Thing in *Josephus*, I will not trouble my

* See *Plutarch's* Life of *Alexander*.

self to examine every Particular; and shall only say, that nothing can be produced from him to shake the Truth of sacred History, *Vid. Hod. de version. Bibl. Lib. ii. Cap. vi. p. 146.*

LVIII. Origen was, as all will acknowledge, a Man of great Literature, but not the first Christian who had that Qualification. Justin Martyr, Ireneus, Theophilus Antiochenus, Athenagoras, Clemens Alexandrinus, Tertullian, Minutius Felix, and many more who preceeded, and were cotemporary with him, were eminent for Learning, as well as Piety, and whose Abilities were sufficient to wipe off that popular Objection against Christianity, that none but Fools were Christians. Origen was not denyed the Title of Saint, because of his Learning, nor is the want of Learning and excess of Zeal, a meritorious Qualification for it: The Title is given to some of as great Parts and Learning, as any in their own Time, or who succeeded them. But this is one of this Authors hints, as if none but Fools could be true and sincere Christians. I pray God encrease the Number of those whom he calls Fools. As for the *Wisdom* which he and his Society glory in, we find it describ'd long ago *Wisd. ii.* and it is such as may be pitied and despised, but there is no reason to envy it.

LIX. P. 162. Minucius Felix is brought into the List of those who are represented to have little or no regard for any Religion, though he wrote an *Apology* for the Christian. This is one of

of the best Books next the Bible, as he makes Mr. Reeves say, who has translated it, and some other Apologies, and given some useful Notes upon them : But Mr. Reeves Words are, *The Holy Scriptures (God be praised) are at liberty, and in English; but the next valuable Writings are still under Lock and Key, and sealed up as'twere in Greek and Latin, from the Understanding of the People.*

By way of Irony he says, that *Minucius* had such a noble Idea of Christianity, as to say, that *either the Christians were all Philosophers, or all the old Philosophers were Christians.* But this is after his usual way of mis-representing Persons, and wresting their Words. For *Minucius* doth not say so, with Respect to Christianity in general, or to the peculiar Mysteries and Institutions of it, but only in regard of its moral Precepts, and particularly the Belief of one God of an infinite, excellent Nature; so that there could be no reasonable Prejudice against Christianity, seeing Christians taught what the old Philosophers aim'd at.

Nor does he more fairly represent him in the following Quotations, as if *Minucius* railed against Churches, publick Preaching, and publick Assemblies, of which there is not a word in the Apology. For both *Minucius*, and all the Heathens, knew that these were used among Christians. But he inveighs against the Notions which the Heathens had of their Temples, Shrines and Sacrifices, as if they could charm, chain, and confine their Gods, in which the Papists, at least the vulgar

vulgar sort do not much differ from them. If any desire to know the true Sentiments of *Minucius*, let them read the Translation of Mr. *Reeves* with his *Notes*.

LX. P. 165. He lays hold on *Syneſius*, and believes that he has lighted on a good *Handle* for insulting Religion and the Clergy. So *Baxter* made use of the same Instance against the Credit of *Episcopacy*, which Dr. *Maurice* has answered in his learned *Treatise* of *Primitive Episcopacy*, p. 213.

This Author after his wonted Manner, neither tells the Story of *Syneſius* right, nor yet translates his Words fairly. For he makes him speak contemptibly of the *Resurrection*, by calling it *a Threadbare Story*, as if it was of no Importance, whether true or false; whereas the Word which *Syneſius* uses is grave, signifying that which is well known, and generally received. Nor is it believed, that he doubted the Truth of the Resurrection, but only hesitated about the Resurrection of the same *individual* and *numerical Body*, and some other common Explication of Christian Myſteries. And the Occasion of confessing so freely his Doubts of these Things, or dissembling the Belief of them, was to divert *Theophilus* Bishop of *Alexandria*, and the People from chusing him Bishop of *Ptolemais*, to which *Syneſius* had a great Aversion. Bishop *Taylor* tells the Story thus. “ *Syneſius*, Bishop
“ of *Ptolemais*, was a wise Man, and a great
“ Philosopher. But when he was chosen Bishop,
“ he

“ he refused it passionately, and that his refusal might be accepted, declaim’d most bitterly against himself; that he was a Man given to Gaming, from which a Bishop should be free as God himself; that he did not believe that the World would ever perish; that he did not assent to the Article of the Resurrection of the Dead; that being a Philosopher of the *Stoical Sect*, he was something given to Lying; that he was not popular in his Opinions, but humorous and morose, secret and resolute, that if he was forc’d to be a Bishop, he would then preach all his Opinions. For all this *Theophilus* Bishop of *Alexandria* consecrated him Bishop, as knowing all this to be but Stratagem, and the Arts of an odd phantastick Humility. But ’twas ill done, and *Synesius* had this Punishment for his lying Modesty, that he was believ’d by Posterity to be so heathenish and unworthy, that that Church chose him Bishop only upon hopes he would mend. So *Evagrius* and *Nicphorus* report. Ductor *Dub. B. iii. Ch. ii. Sect. 18.*

Now whatever was in this Matter, suppose *Theophilus* weak and rash in promoting *Synesius*, and suppose *Synesius* to be on diverse Accounts unqualified, yet what reason to object this single Instance against either Religion or the Clergy? Does the Credit of Religion, or the Doctrine of the Church depend on private particular Persons, that they must stand or fall with them.

LXI. P. 169. He haies my Lord *Bacon* into his Club, but without his consent, neither should he stand there. He was indeed a great Man, and allowed himself to think freely, in the innocent Sense of the Expression. But he never spake irreverently of God, neither made a Jest of Religion. He detected *Superstition*, exposed the weakness of *Livy*, and with good Reason threw a Suspicion upon his Prodigies and strange Stories : But never gave a hint to make a false Application to the relations of Scripture, or to the Christian Religion.

LXII. *Thomas Hobbes* certainly stands right. He was one of the Authors own Kidney. I know not what Virtue he had, but without doubt he was an Instance of such *Free-thinking*, as this Author is in love with : For he propagated Atheism and Impiety with all zeal and earnestness, and was so bent upon this kind of *Free-thinking*, and carried it to that Degree, that at last he thought away common Sense and Understanding ; for he was fond only of such Notions as had no Foundation in Nature, Reason, or true History, but which contradicted all of them. *Euclid* and *Archimedes*, and the other great Masters of *Mathematicks*, were as mean in his Eyes, as *Priests* in this puny Admirer and Follower of him. Nor would *Hobbes* allow certainty in the *Mathematicks*, more than in the *Christian Religion* ; and he thought that he had infallibly overturned the Foundation of that *demonstrative Science*, by proving or asserting, that there was

no such Thing in Nature as a *Mathematical Punctum* or *Line*, or *Superficies*. Therefore Mr. *Echard* answered *Hobbes* fitly according to his Folly, by treating him and his Principles into *Ridicule*.

The Philosophy and Principles of Mr. *Hobbes* are not the more reasonable or more worthy of Acceptation, because of that Character which he draws out of my Lord *Clarendon*; for his Lordship did not think, that these good Qualities, which he once knew to be in Mr. *Hobbes*, was a Justification of his Errors and dangerous Opinions, for his Lordship among others wrote against him. My Lord *Clarendon* was so fair, as to own whatever was good in any, either from Nature or Acquisition. He does not conceal the good Parts of *Hambden*, *Pymme*, and the other Ringleaders of that horrid Rebellion against King *Charles* the I. nor yet of *Cromwell* the Usurper; should therefore Sedition, Treachery, Rebellion, and villanous Outrages against the Sovereign and Constitution, I say, should these go glibly down, or be tolerated as harmless Things, because Men of such Parts were Authors of them.

LXIII. He closes his List of *Free-thinkers* with one, who cannot be put among them without Violence and Unjustice, having exposed the Folly of Atheism, own'd the Belief of the Mysteries of our Religion, and recommended with perswasive Arguments, all its moral Precepts. I confess that there are in his Discourses, *here*
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and *there* some indiscreet and unwary Sayings which may be wrested : But passing these Slips, and taking him altogether, he cannot without Injury, be judged to have been of the *Society* of this *Authors Free-thinkers*. Nor do I believe that this Author thinks he was, but 'twas serviceable to his wicked Design, to list this great Man among them, for discrediting his *Writings*, and to get them shuffled aside, because they indeed stand in the way of *Atbeism* and *Impiety*. And who knows but some *Emis-saries* of *Rome* may be in the Plot, because he so strenuously defended the Protestant Doctrine : For we know that one of their Instructions is to deface all Sense of Religion, if there be not any likelihood of succeeding directly in the Attempts for advancing the Interest of the Church of *Rome*. And it is observable, that that Church and its Priests are but mentioned once or twice by Name, whereas our Church and Clergy are libelled all along this Discourse.

LXIV. I have now consider'd both the general Scope of this Book, and also the particular Instances made use of to advance it. Some few Passages I have slip'd over, because referring to Persons and Books which I had neither Time nor Opportunity to examine, having been hindred by some Indisposition, and also interrupted with some vexatious Affairs. But I have omitted no material Point, which was necessary to correct the Notion of Free-thinking in general, or to set People right in those

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important

important Subjects which ought to be thought of with all Care and Seriousness. This has induced me to enlarge a little upon some Things, which I believed the Generality were not well acquainted with. For I had all the while in my View, not the Learned, but such as were apt to Stumble, if present Help was not afforded.

I know some have express'd themselves very warmly against all Answers to this *Discourse of Free-thinking*, partly because 'twould give it too much Credit, and partly because there being nothing in it besides Impudence and profane Drollery, it could not be thought to do much hurt. But how often has this Nation had the woful Experience of the pernicious Effects of *Impudence* and *Drollery*, together with *flashes of seeming Wit*, which indeed is wanting here. It is I confess a great Instance of the Weakness of our People, and also of their Levity and Inconstancy; but it is true, that by these Means they have been shaken in their Minds, debauch'd in their Principles, unhinged from their Duty, and made to stand by to let in great Disorders and Confusions. And what would be more fatal to this Nation, than if the Design of this Discourse should obtain, which is to turn *Christianity* out of Doors, and to set up Atheism, Paganism, and all Impiety. It is easier preventing, than remedying. I know many are more able for either; but I thought it my Duty to shew my good Will, and to join my Endeavours for preserving such as have not gone aside, or regaining those that are reclaimable.

But

But as for this *Author* and his *Club*, there can be little, or rather no Hopes of them, for they are hardned against all Conviction. And 'twould seem by the Impudence of publishing *this Discourse*, that they are not under any Terror of our *Laws*, nor afraid of the *Civil Power*, but think that they have so fortified themselves, as to be able to wrestle with it. This should alarm all who have any Sense of God and Religion, to shake off Indifferency and Luke-warmness, to put on a holy and prudent Zeal, and to address God with all Seriousness, to put a stop to this growing Iniquity, which is a Prefage of both Temporal and Spiritual Judgments.

Arise O God, plead thine own Cause; remember how the foolish Man reproacheth thee daily.

(39) Sodium
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